SCIENCE FICTION

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Galaxy

MAGAZINE

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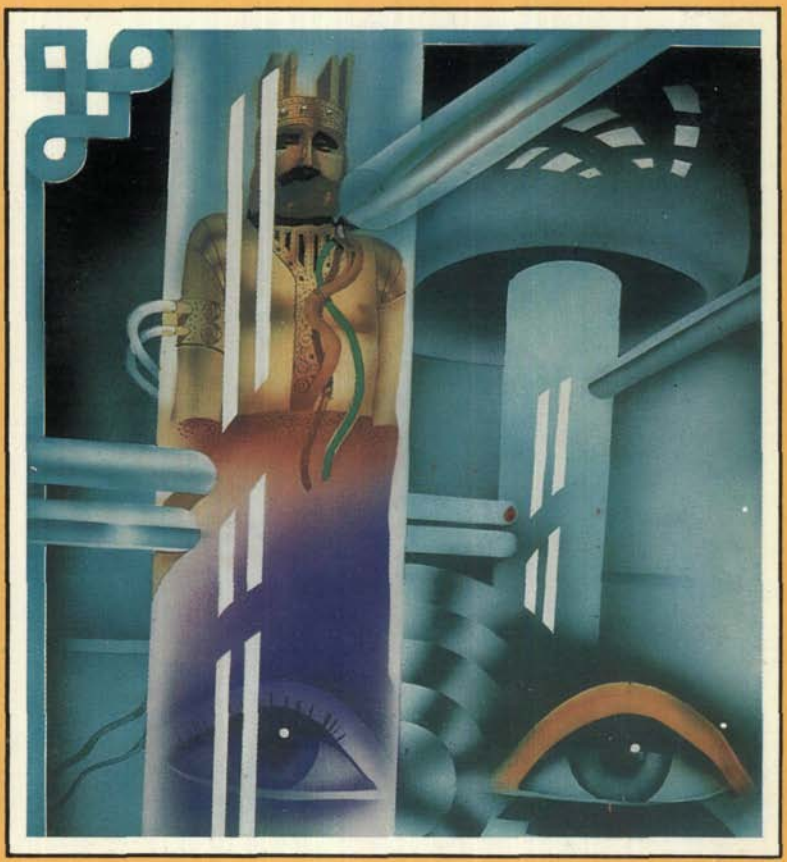
JOE HALDEMAN



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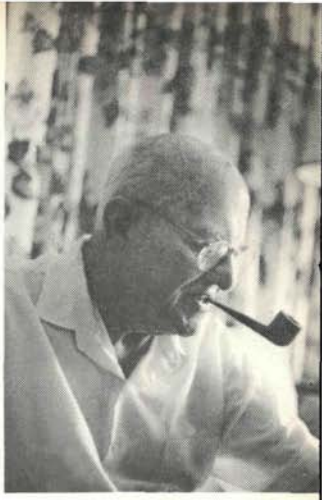

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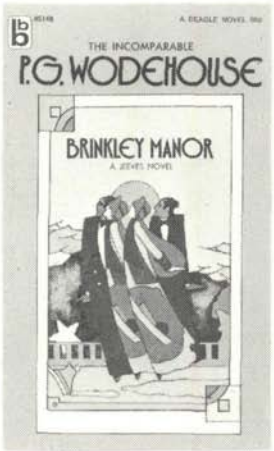

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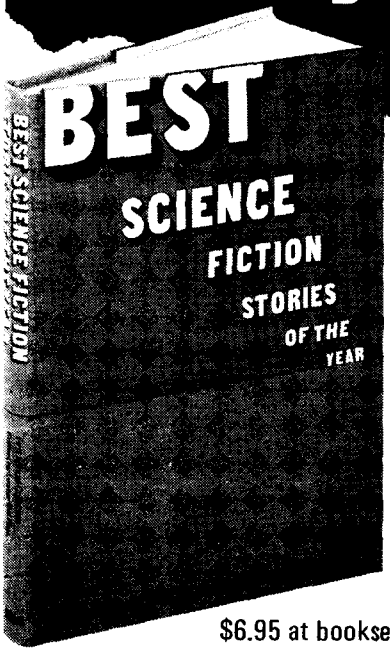

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September-October 1972
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Galaxy
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JOHN D. CLARK

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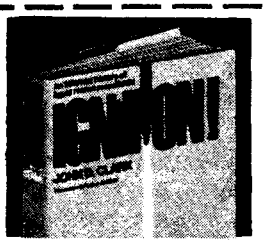

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PUBLISHER

ARNOLD E. ABRAMSON

The United States Postal Service, now a semi-independent governmental corporation, recently increased postage rates by 1.4 *billion* dollars.

And that's just the beginning. In its new budget, the Postal Service is asking for an additional *414 million dollars*!

Included is an increase in magazine and newspaper rates of *142%* over the next five years—starting with a 30% increase this year. And with no reasonable prospect of any improvement in service to you.

Despite the President's efforts to curb inflation by means of his 5.5% price and wage stabilization program, the Postal Service pursues this irresponsible plan for enormous rate increases—both immediate and future. Where is the logic in achieving success on some fronts while permitting the Postal Service to touch off roaring inflation in its own area?

The contemplated postal increases, of course, would start an inevitable inflationary chain-reaction. Unable to absorb the higher costs, publishers would be obliged to pass on a portion of them to the public—and to advertisers who in turn would have to pass on the increases to consumers of their goods. Directly or indirectly, *it will be you who pays!*

So we earnestly appeal to the President, to Congress and to you, the readers of *Worlds of IF*, to hold the line on postal-rate increases for at least three compelling reasons:

1. *To deter the general inflation threatening all of us—man, woman and child.*

2. *To protect yourself, specifically, from inflationary pressures on advertised products that you buy.*

3. *To keep costs at a level permitting the free press of America to survive.*

We feel that our position is reasonable. We hope that you agree and will write your Congressman accordingly. It would please us to have a copy of your letter.

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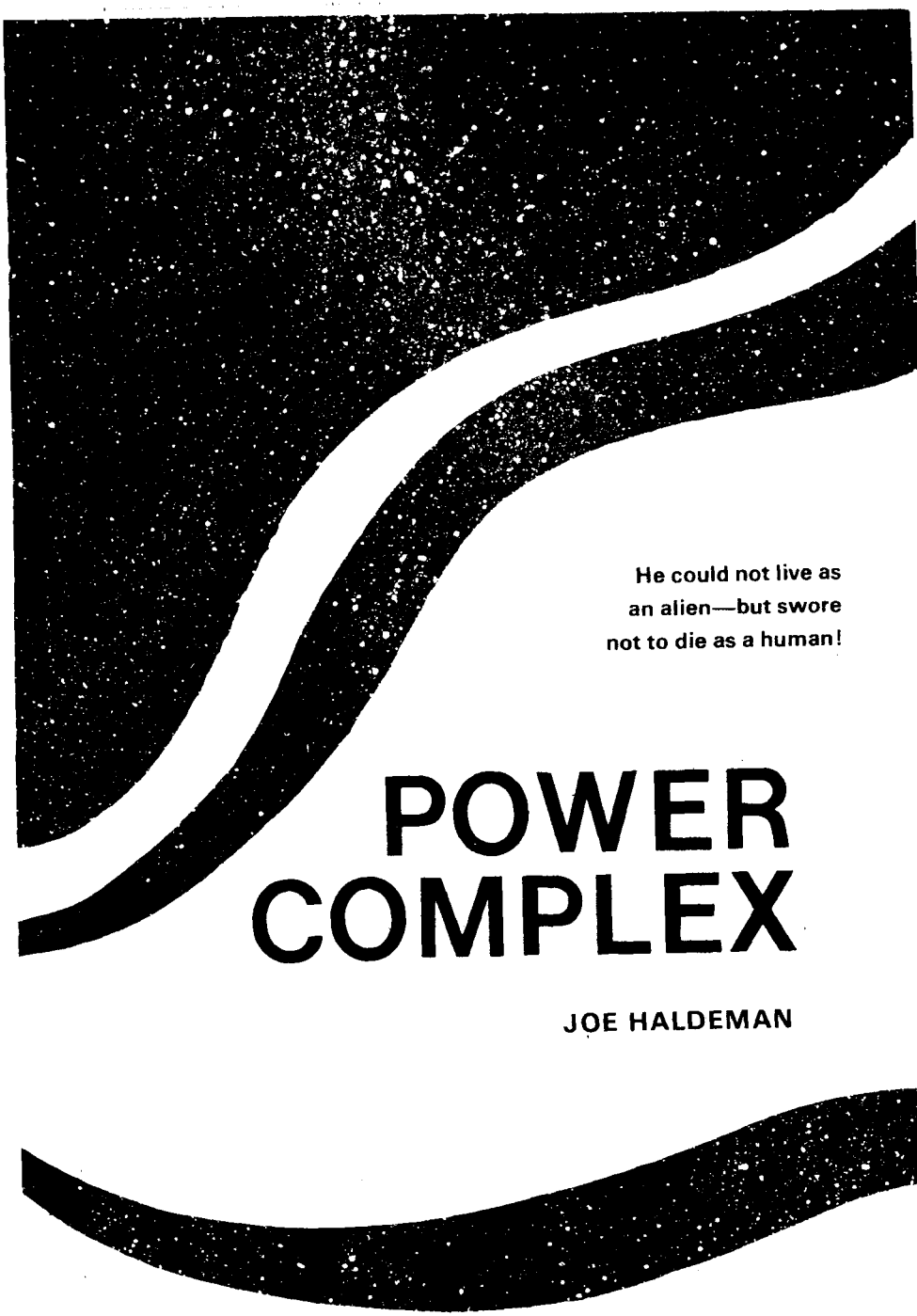

He could not live as an alien—but swore not to die as a human!

POWER COMPLEX

JOE HALDEMAN

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I

THE President of the United States was an alien.

Ross Harriman was what they called him and he let them. His own name had a decidedly foreign flavor.

The record stated that he had been born in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1945, and after a half-century of reasonably honest living and politicking had come to be Vice President. On the death of President Ashby, Harriman became President.

The President of the United States cannot, of course, legally be an alien. Article II, Section I of the Constitution clearly states: "No person except a natural born Citizen of the United States. . . shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any person . . . who shall not have attained to the age of thirty-five years. . ."

In point of fact Harriman, who called himself something that sounded like Braxn, had not been born at all. He had been budded about six months before stepping into office on an interstellar survey vessel just out of the Vega system and had eased into the first stage of maturity about a week before the ship reached our solar system and went into orbit around Earth.

The problem of Braxn's nationality would have interested quite a few people, as there was a pregnant woman on Tranquility Base and there would no doubt soon be another on Tsiolkovski. The *jus sanguinis* argument was somewhat simplified in Braxn's case, as he had only one parent, his bud-father Brohass, who was a "pure-blooded" G'drellian. The *jus soli*, or place of birth, argument, however, was most complicated—Braxn began life somewhere on a non-Euclidian geodesic stretching from Vega to Earth through seventeen distinct (of course) dimensions.

Braxn could probably have made a point for claiming himself a citizen of either Vega system or Sol system. But the inhabitants of one were pre-literate gibbering savages and the inhabitants of the other not much better—so he had let the option go and remained a G'drellian.

Outside of legal fiction, of course, Braxn could only be a G'drellian and would never wish to be anything else. The inhabitants of G'drell were about the most gifted creatures in the galaxy—the best shape-changers and quickest learners, very good philosophers and mathematicians, virtually (absolutely, they claimed) immortal, powerful telepaths, competent humorists, sometimes talented weather forecasters and inventors. A G'drellian invented the drive all interstellar ships use—it has a moving part but doesn't wear out. Neither does it use anything as cumbersome as fuel. Every adult

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G'drellian understands the principle behind the drive. But they've never been able to explain it to anybody else—or so they claim.

So—at an age when a human child is barely able to focus his eyes and reach for a bottle, Braxn was teaching quantum mechanics to a class of Oxford upperclassmen. When that calling began to seem dull to him—after one afternoon—he became a cutthroat bandit on the Trieste waterfront. That preoccupation lasted almost a whole day. And so on.

During his first stage of development Braxn, like all G'drellian children, was after variety in experiences. The one thing common to all his little experiments in living was that he either inflicted or experienced pain or discomfort—from simple embarrassment to excruciating death. These sensations he arranged into a system of esthetics that was, to say the least, incomprehensible to mere sane humans.

To an adult G'drellian, though, they were on the order of fingerpaintings.

THROUGHOUT this childish stage the immature G'drellian is protected from real harm by a considerable ability to manipulate time and space, matter and energy by purely mental effort. He could repair damaged tissues by transmutation of any available matter or, if given warning, simply teleport out of harm's way.

While learning about pain Braxn destroyed several hundred sentient creatures. And in his lovable childlike way he felt no more remorse for them than a zoologist feels for the specimens he dissects. Less.

A time came when Braxn had reached a plateau of sophistication in dealing with the illusions (to him) of pain and death. He was now ready to pass on to the next phase of his education—the manipulation of power.

At this particular moment of history—the last decade of the twentieth century—two laboratories of sufficient size and scope existed for Braxn to use as a base for his investigation of power. One was the fifty-two United States of America and the other was what was loosely called The Eastern Bloc—forty-nine or fifty (the number changed every now and then) countries and fractions of countries which at least paid lip service to the ideals of Marx and/or Mao and/or Lenin.

When Braxn had to make the choice he was in the state of New York, which is closer to Washington than to Novymoscva. The effort required to teleport was more important to him than the minuscule difference he saw between communism and capitalism, between oriental inscrutability and

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occidental brashness. So he became President.

It took him less than a microsecond to elect himself.

First he killed the President by the simple expedient of wishing a heart attack on him. He disposed of the Vice President after duplicating the latter's body and brain and was swished into office by the law of succession. The period of confusion after the President's death, Braxn reasoned, would cover any mistakes he might make out of inexperience. Besides, he had at his disposal all of the political acumen stored up in the former Vice President's brain.

Unfortunately, as is often the case with Vice Presidents, this was not much. But the personal details were useful.

Braxn stumbled through the first hours of office, giving a convincing imitation of a bewildered Ross Harriman suddenly weighed down by grief and a crushing burden of responsibility. By 3:00 A.M., after numberless conferences, speeches, comfortings and a few genuine surprises—China turned out not to have been behind the newest Pakistan conflict—the army of advisors, well-wishers, reporters and opportunists let the new Chief Executive retire for the night.

OF COURSE, being a G'drellian, Braxn needed sleep no more than he needed pollen or diesel fuel. But he was glad to get away from public scrutiny so he could relax in a more comfortable shape.

Once satisfied that his suite was free of bugs and that he was in no danger of sudden interruption, Braxn mentally reviewed the shapes available in his repertoire. He settled on being a Persian rug. He had been one before and enjoyed the musty taste and the soothing colors and the fuzzy feel of air wafting over him. He set his mind in the Persian rug pattern and *pushed*.

Nothing happened. He *pushed* again in the familiar way, but instead of rolling out on the floor in a riot of rich color he stayed the same shape and the air in front of him shimmered and solidified into an image of his father, Brohass.

Brohass held up a tentacle. "Don't try to say anything, Braxn old bud, because the following is a recorded announcement, which you triggered by trying to change shape. I don't know how long you stayed in that dumpy Harriman body before you decided to slip into something more comfortable. Doesn't really make any difference. You're stuck with being Harriman for a while—with one important exception.

"While you were an infant, in the aesthetic stage of your development, you did quite a bit of violence to your environment. This was necessary for reasons that will one day

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be quite clear to you. While you were on your rampage you had to be protected from the possible consequences of your violence—thus you were given certain of the powers of an adult G'drellian. These included, but were not limited to, transmutation, teleportation, telekinesis and the ability to read and manipulate the minds of others.

"Starting now, you may use these powers only in a limited way. I command this, as your father and as your teacher, because the present stage of your development involves the manipulation and appreciation of power and, being virtually omnipotent by the standards of this planet's aborigines, you could otherwise no more learn about power than one could learn to be a gourmet while being continually gorged with food. Don't—"

"The—"

"—interrupt. As a G'drellian you will, however, enjoy certain advantages. Most creatures in relatively complete control of their environment never get any balanced appreciation of their power—the use of their strengths insulates them philosophically. You, son, will not be limited in this wise. You will find that you have a new talent. It will enable you to feel directly the effects of wielding power You may not like it—its application will be random and painful. I leave for you to discover its nature on your own.

"One word of warning. Don't attempt to use freely your ability to transfer personality from one body to another. It could be dangerous. Because you can die in this phase of your growth."

Die? Braxn had seen hundreds of animate beings die, but it had never occurred to him that he himself might perish.

"Yes, you can die. G'drellians are immortal only after the fourth phase. You may die and, to be perfectly candid, your death would upset me no more than if you had aborted as a bud. You are still an imperfect, unformed organism. Anyhow, about the personality transfer. If Harriman's body dies—you will die. Even if you transfer and leave Harriman behind you will still die if Harriman does—and in addition you will share the dangers of another body.

"It's not an easy phase to go through, Braxn. I well remember my own power stage. But I'm confident you can handle it. I'm looking forward to assessing your progress some months or years from now—when the ship returns to pick you up. Until then—learn and grow."

THE image of the octopoid figure faded out and the telephone chimed. Braxn glared at it and savagely punched the FULL VIEW button.

"Mr. President—Senator Tweed says he has to see you immediately."

"Damn it, Fred!" Braxn

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exploded. "Tell Tweed he can see me in the morning. It's been too damn rough a day for me to sit up here and choke on his infernal Italian cigar smoke."

"Well, sir—I don't mean to appear to—uh—"

"Goddamn it, Fred, you never minced words with the old man. Show me the same consideration. Spit it out."

"Sir, Senator Tweed *is* the majority leader—"

"And I'm the minority President."

"Yes, sir. And he's very conscious of protocol—or at least the overt formalities. You *must* see him before you receive any other member of Congress."

"Jesus Christ." Braxn slid the old-fashioned hornrims off his face and knuckled an eye in a well-known gesture. "Mana."

"Sir?"

"I've got mana. Anthropologist's word." Fred looked at Braxn in a subtly different way and Braxn thought, *You ignored old Harriman while you were Ashby's right hand—now you're surprised to find out that he might be more than just a harmless puppet.* "Tweed wants to be first in line while the magic's still fresh—or something. I read about it somewhere." Braxn stared thoughtfully at Fred's image. *He knows I'm backing off. Does he know I know he knows?* "Hell, send him in. Call the plant and have 'em turn the airco all the way up. Make it as noisy as possible." He grinned at the screen and clamped the glasses back on. "Maybe the old bastard forgot his hearing aid."

A secret service man conspicuously armed with a high-energy laser tube opened the thick oak door and ushered in Arthur Tweed. The majority leader was an old man who in the right light could have looked like an old woman—shoulder-length stringy hair framed his wrinkled and bony features. But he strode through the door not at all like an octogenarian kept up six hours past his bedtime. He crinkled a smile at Braxn that lasted until the door whispered shut. Then eighty-three years dropped like a frayed cloak over Tweed's frail body and his grin became a spinster's smile.

Braxn ignored the switch from the college-boy routine. Tweed was a veteran actor who knew that not even Presidents were immune to pity.

"Good of you to see me at this hour, Ross," Tweed offered.

Braxn raised an eyebrow. Tweed had known Harriman for eighteen years and had never used Harriman's first name before.

Braxn waited a fraction of a second longer than was polite before replying, "My pleasure, Senator. Please pull up a chair." Purely rhetorical—the old man didn't look strong enough to pull up his own drawers.

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Tweed perched himself on the edge of an overstuffed chair to Braxn's right. "I've already offered you my official condolences, but please let me—"

Braxn cut him short with a chop of his hand.

"Skip it. You didn't like the old bastard any more than I did."

"Uh—huh!" The Senator slid back in his chair. "Huh—huh—" It took Braxn a second to realize Tweed was laughing. "That's what I like—huh—huh—a man who speaks his mind—huh!"

Just what you don't like, you devious old fool. . .

TWEED reached into his vest pocket and extracted a short black Toscani cigar. The sulfurous vapor from the wooden match was balm to the nose, compared to what followed. The airco cut in at just the right moment, loudly. Tweed looked at Braxn through narrowed eyes.

"You can't be feeling the heat, Ross."

"No." Braxn pushed an immaculate silver ashtray across the desk to Tweed. "Is this just a social visit or do you have something in mind?"

"Mnh. Well, no. I'm here about a bill, the Selective Service renewal—Ashby was going to sign it tomorrow."

"Really?" Braxn smiled.

"*Yes*, damn it! He— we talked him into it."

Ballantine Books

THE GoH at the LACon this year is the fellow who introduced us to the whole world of science fiction—he and Fletcher Pratt, that lovable marmoset. Between Fred Pohl and Fletcher, we got to meet everybody. Fred edited the classic STAR series that introduced us to the s-f world. All originals they were, and really great stuff. So to celebrate with Frederik Pohl, master copysmith of them all, we are reissuing the STAR series (all six in one glup—with fantastic covers by Berkey), along with Fred's latest collection for us,* The Star At The Rainbow's End. *All ready for the Con. This is his ninth collection and the 34th book to appear on the BB list either authored by, co-authored by, or edited by Frederik Pohl (under his own name, that is. More than 34 if you count pseudonyms). Mr. Pohl is a very impressive person, a highly sophisticated writer with an IQ of 160, and a great speaker. . . But mostly we love him and are delighted he's GoH. And it is somehow fitting that Fred is still aboard for the twentieth anniversary in our Ballantine Books incarnation. Blessings on you, Frederik and Carol.

●●●

LEST you, gentle reader, imagine that Fred is the only fellow we publish, we'd better quickly tell you of the other titles appearing in July and August.

IN JULY*—The Night Land, Vols. I & II, *by that crazy William Hope Hodgson, a Women's Lib nightmare. Shades of My Precious Baby Slave, ye Gods. Along with William, a splendid anthology unimaginatively (but accurately) titled* Best Of The Year *and edited by (of course) Terry Carr.

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***IN AUGUST, the third volume of the Mabinogion myth—*The Song Of Rhiannon*—by that remarkable lady, Evangeline Walton, who continues to surprise us with the strength, individuality and stature of each succeeding volume. You keep thinking she just can't do it again, and then she quietly goes ahead and does. Miss Walton is one of the joys of being a publisher. (In case you're wondering, from the bitching in our last column, why we go bravely on). She really is superb, and one of these years some Johnny-come-Lately out there in the mainstream is going to discover her. In the meantime, all you fortunate and intelligent science-fiction freaks, be sure you have all three Evangeline Walton volumes—*The Island Of The Mighty, The Children Of Llyr, *and now* The Song Of Rhiannon.**

August sees a new R. W. Mackelworth, startling us with an exercise in extraordinary logic,* Starflight 3000*—a brilliant extrapolation.

●●●

INCIDENTALLY, we are celebrating our 20th Anniversary with the reissue of fifteen topnotch BB titles. They'll be appearing in their own special rack in August—all with brand new covers, and at the backbreaking price of $1.25. (An adjective which clearly dates us). Still, it is great for the authors, who include: Arthur C. Clarke, James Blish, Ray Bradbury, John Brunner, Philip José Farmer, C. M. Kornbluth, Fritz Leiber, Larry Niven, Frederik Pohl, Theodore Sturgeon and John Wyndham. Ballantine Books is proud, and this department is personally happy, to have been publishers of many of the leading authors of our century. BB

"Tripling the draft call?"

"Of course. If we don't, Pakistan's bound to go under."

"Bull—twangy." Braxn took a cigarette out of the ornate case on the desk and waved it alight. "Ashby never believed that. If you believe it you've been listening to your own speeches."

"Huh! Nevertheless, I think you may want to reevaluate your own position, Ross."

"Cut and dried, Senator. It's another Vietnam. We're pulling out as soon as—"

"Ross, you were a military man, weren't you?"

"You know damn well I was. West Point—and I'm still a military man, incidentally." He smiled. "Commander-in-Chief."

"Ah. Yes, Purple Heart, I believe. Silver Star. For bravery. In Vietnam."

"That's right."

"You were a real crackerjack combat officer."

"Get to the point."

"Yes." Tweed blew a leisurely ring that floated a foot and broke up in the air currents. "A man has to have honorable military service before he can think of running for office. It's the American way. Combat, preferably. I was in Korea, of course."

"Of course."

"Honorable service." Tweed blew another smoke ring.

"The point?"

"Yes. A—uh—man came to my

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office tonight. With a series of photographs."

"How intriguing."

"The man was your copilot, Ross, when your helicopter went down during a mission and you won the Silver Star defending it."

"And?"

"The photographs, yes. They indicate that your helicopter was not shot down—it was grounded by mechanical failure. And that your wound was self-inflicted."

"Get out."

"Now just a minute, Ross—I don't for a second believe—"

"Out."

"I was just—"

"Listen, Tweed. Any military doctor can look at that wound even now—after thirty years—and tell you it came from a fifty-caliber machine gun. A man can no more 'self-inflict' a fifty-caliber wound than he can shoot himself with a howitzer."

"Ross, Ross, I know that. I told you—I don't for a moment believe him. But you know as well as I that once the accusation is made—"

"What do you—does he—want?"

"He's a fanatic militarist, Ross. He wants you to sign the draft bill."

Braxn laughed—one short bark. "I'll think about it. Tell him I'll think about it." He rose and glowered down at the little old man. "It was a pleasure speaking to you, Senator."

Tweed levered himself out of the chair and laid the smoldering cigar in the little silver bowl. "I hope you'll be in touch with me."

"Goodbye, Senator." When the man had disappeared behind the wall of oak Braxn punched the phone for Fred. "What do we have on old Tweed?"

"Almost nothing, Mr. President. He has a mistress, but he's had her for thirty years. She's ugly as sin."

"Hauling her out would gain him more votes than she would cost him. Put some of the staff to work on him. Then you get some sleep. I'm going to do the same."

BRAXN left his office and, accompanied by the ubiquitous secret service guard, retired to his personal quarters. The guard stayed outside the door.

"Thanks, Captain." He closed the door gently so as not to awaken Harriman's wife, now presumably asleep in the master bedroom. They wouldn't be moving upstairs to the executive apartments, of course, until Elizabeth Ashby moved out.

Braxn strode into the study and sat down at the huge desk. The antique overstuffed swivel chair groaned and squeaked a pleasant fugue of old bearings and new leather. He started at the top of the stack of papers overflowing the IN box.

"Ross?" Standing in the door, in the half-light from the desk lamp, Linda Harriman looked almost pretty. She stepped closer and the illusion vanished.

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"'Morning, darling." Braxn watched her approach, putting on Harriman's smile of genuine affection. Thirty years earlier people had whispered about "political suicide" when Ross Harriman had married the homeliest girl in Madison society. But the years that had blunted the fragile beauty of her contemporaries had been kind to her, softening planes and juts into gentle curves.

"You shouldn't be up." She took the cigarette from his mouth and laid it in the ashtray. "Tomor—today is going to be hard."

"I caught a nap earlier." He turned back to the desk.

She tugged a curl of his hair. "Liar." She smiled. "Try to get some sleep before you jump into the fray again."

"Okay." He chuckled and squeezed her hand goodbye.

When she was gone Braxn started to riffle through the hundred pages of synopses Ashby's staff had prepared—summations of bills, personal requests, appointments, all needing action in the next week or ten days. Luckily Harriman had a reputation for being a fast reader—though with regrettably shallow comprehension.

In a half-hour he had memorized the synopses and decided on tentative courses of action. He reached for the phone and tapped out Fred's combination.

An unfamiliar face peered at him from the screen, seemed about to phrase a nasty comment, then registered recognition. "Oh, Mr. President—let me get Mr. Aller."

"Don't wake him up on my account. Just checking on something."

"He's awake, sir. I'll get him." After a moment Fred Aller filled the screen. His ascot was unkempt. He sat down, hollow-eyed and stubble-chinned.

"Damn it, Fred, I told you to get some sleep."

"I know, sir. Something big came up."

"Oh? What?"

"Might be something we can use on Tweed."

"Then why wasn't I called?"

"Sir, I thought you were asleep—you need rest as much as I do." Fred's eyes moved that fraction out of line that showed he was staring at the screen. "Maybe you didn't need it as much. Still have TV makeup on?"

"Hell, no. Got some uppers from the doc. What's the scoop on Tweed?"

"Same thing he wants to pull on you. We have spies—"

"What?"

"—not in your office, sir, in his. Holographic infrared laser bug, its optical locus in the glass over an eighteenth-century painting Tweed thinks has been hanging in front of his desk since the Roosevelt administration. The first—Teddy."

"Same thing, you said. Do you mean his war record?"

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"That's right, sir. But in his case the facts are more or less verifiable. He was commanding a front-line infantry platoon in Korea and got fragged, hit by a—"

"—grenade. Yes, I know what 'fragged' means."

"Rifle grenade. Anyhow, he was evacuated to the rear for treatment. There they taped him up and sent him to a hospital in Japan, diagnosing neurasthenia."

"Shell shock?"

"Right. That could cost him a few vet votes right there. Lots of people think that shell shock is just a nice word for cowardice. This isn't on his medical record, by the way—he covered his tracks pretty well. But that's not half of it. He lounged around Japan for a month—whoring it up—and then got transferred back to Stateside. He took a Pentagon job, reporting to Walter Reed once a month for examination."

"I don't know," Braxn said. "It's good stuff, but it's too diffuse. An awful lot of people wouldn't see anything particularly reprehensible about any of that."

"Ah, sir, but the clincher is how he got out of Japan. The second in command in the hospital was his uncle—whom he later got appointed to a high place in the army medical service—a post the uncle held for only three months before being discharged for gross incompetence and dishonesty. The information and the link to Tweed are fully documented and classified. Publication would stir up more stink than the Pentagon Papers in the seventies."

"Hah!" Braxn slapped a palm on the desk. "That might do it. Can you get me a package of evidence, photocopies and such, before noon?"

"Already made up, sir."

"Wonderful. Call the old bastard's secretary and tell him that the President desires the Senator's company for lunch tomorrow."

II

THE White House chef had prepared a mild Chicken Kiev, in deference to Tweed's aging entrails. The two men washed it down with a white Bordeaux—not a bad wine but not quite as good as the most junior Senator of the President's party would have gotten.

Both men were in formal black. Soon after lunch they would have to get into their respective limousines and join the cortege bearing Ashby's remains down Pennsylvania Avenue Mall, cleared of pedestrian traffic for the occasion, around to the Lincoln Memorial and across the bridge to Arlington Cemetery. Braxn reflected that Tweed would have no trouble looking appropriately sad once he saw the contents of the manila folder sitting in the back seat of his waiting car.

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After lunch Braxn escorted Tweed to the secluded atrium that Ashby had caused to be built shortly following his inauguration. It was a pleasant green place to go to relax and was incidentally filled with disruptors and noise generators in every frequency, which made it totally impossible to bug. The slight hiss and hum where the little watchdogs spilled over into audible frequencies was nicely masked by a soothing miniature waterfall.

Braxn produced brandy and offered the old man a Havana.

"No, thanks, Ross. I used to smoke 'em before you were born. But we went into that embargo nonsense when I was just getting started in politics and I had to lose my taste for them." He accepted the brandy, though. Braxn lit up a Havana and Tweed ignited a black Toscani.

"A pity to rush a good cigar," Braxn said, taking a deep puff and letting the smoke trickle out of one corner of his mouth. "But I suppose we have some business."

"Business, yes. Yes."

"Your—ah—your photographer friend?"

"Yes, hum, he says he's having bids submitted by *Time/Life* and—"

"Damn!" Braxn jumped out of his chair.

"Calm down, calm down, Ross. You aren't implicated yet. All they're smelling is—'a scandal involving a high government official.' They'll be bidding against the *Times,* WPI and the Scanlan Syndicate."

"And if I comply with your—*his* demands, what does he tell the firm that wins the bid?"

Tweed chuckled. The sound fell somewhere between a death rattle and a pant. "Don't worry, Ross. We have an alternate—"

"To throw to the wolves. So another member of my party, instead of me, gets the gaff. An unattractive dilemma, Senator."

"No, not one of yours, Ross. One of my own."

"Not Sam!"

Tweed answered with a deathshead grin wreathed in gray smoke.

"God! You're the most—" Braxn sat down and puffed his cigar back to life. "No matter. You old fox." As he used it, the word conjured up a predator-scavenger with needle-sharp fangs and bad breath. Braxn stared at Tweed through a fragrant blue nimbus, then jerked the cigar out of his mouth and laughed.

Tweed jumped.

"Tweed. Oh, Tweed—I don't know many really big mistakes you've made in your career, but this one has got to take the prize. You don't lean on a President—not this way."

Tweed said quietly, "I've made a career of leaning on Presidents."

"There's a manila folder on the seat of your limousine. You go

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down and read it and then decide whether to go through—"

Tweed smiled. "Bribery?"

"What a coarse word. No money is involved, just a trade. Something similar to the commodity you hold."

"Impossible, Ross. There's no way for you to trade your political future for mine. I won't be running next—"

"Bushwah! You've been threatening to retire for twenty years. You can no more stop running than can an animal caught in a forest fire."

Tweed finished off his brandy in one gulp and stood up. "You young—look, Ross, you're out of your league. Why don't you just—"

"Why don't *you* just read the damn thing and we'll talk tomorrow."

"Maybe. I may have an appointment with the gentlemen of the press."

Tweed turned on his heel and stalked out.

BRAXN felt a coldness in the pit of his stomach and was startled to realize that he was afraid. He had never known fear before. He swallowed some brandy and the fire fed the coldness.

"Mr. President?"

"Ah, come in, Fred. Have a drink. It's going to be a long ride."

"Thank you, sir." Fred poured a couple of fingers and sat in the chair Tweed had just vacated. "I've made up a list—here, you'll want to check it." He handed Braxn a sheet of paper. "No banquet, of course, after the state funeral, but these are the people we're 'inviting to dinner.' "

Braxn tried to study the list. It named the representatives of some twenty countries—he seemed unable to focus his mind on it. Suddenly the world *split*—and he knew what his father had been talking about. It was as if only the right side of his body were here in the atrium and talking to Fred—and left side was walking down the steps in front of the White House, inhabiting an old body full of aches and twinges, seeing the cherry blossoms through rheumy, jaundiced eyes.

That young upstart pup Harriman thinks he can scare me—me, for Chris sake! I ought to. . .

Chauffeur opening rear door, touching his cap. "Thank you, Harry."

"God knows I'd like to invite Ramos," Fred was saying. "But if Cuba comes, then what are we going to do with East Germany? And if East Germany and Cuba get together—"

Tweed took a deep sniff of the musty felt smell and was grateful for the thousandth time that he had had that nasty

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fake leather upholstery taken out. The crisp yellow envelope violated the gray fuzzy calm of the interior. *I'm not going to look at it, I'm not, we'll just go ahead the way we planned and the devil take . . .*

"I don't see why we can't have two dinners," Braxn said. "Or a tea and a dinner. These men are all political realists. They can appreciate the situation we're in—look, we can have tea—*a* tea—right after the funeral with Cuba, Britain, Canada—here, the ones I put an *X* by, the ones who are unequivocally—"

Tweed picked up the envelope and broke the plain seal on it. The engine started with a soft purr. *Hell, might as well see . . .*

"I know it would work. Godda—sorry Fred, I've been under a terrific—"

. . . and he screwed up and I had to get rid of . . . quick court martial . . . insane asylum . . . covered my tracks so well hadn't even thought . . . God, my arm. . . "Harry! Stop—my—arm—"

"What's wrong, sir, what—"

"Nothing, Fred. A—a—spasm in my arm—fatigue—"

Paralyzing pain creeping past the shoulder, crawling. . . *Oh, Jesus, Jesus, God . . . another heart attack . . . stop smoking, drinking . . . Jesus . . .* "Harry—"

"Sir, you'd better let me get the doctor, you look positively—"

"No sweat, Fred. I—it's happened a dozen times—before. Doctor said, he said—" *Cold fist . . .*

Cold fist in the middle of his chest, icicle spike nailing him to the seat. . . *When did I lie down?* Fuzzy gray felt ceiling looks on fire—skyrockets, stars exploding there . . . door slams . . . door opens . . . Harry unclips tie and opens front of shirt . . .

"What is it, sir—another attack?"

"Maybe I'd better lie down for just a minute . . . Harry, uh, Fred, would you come—go, please, and get me a glass of water—"

Oh, God, sweet Jesus God . . . the pain . . . pain, Mother

"Mother—"

THE left-hand side of the universe welled up crimson and faded out. Braxn sat up, rubbing his arm, then kneading his chest. Fred

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came tearing in with a glass.

"It's all right, Fred." Braxn held up a wavering hand, refusing the water. "As I say, it's happened—"

Fred's sleeve buzzed. He set down the water and talked to his bracelet. "I'm busy, damn it. What?"

"Tweed's had a heart attack. Right in front here."

Braxn didn't move a muscle. "Get that dossier."

"God, that's right, that's what—" he spoke to the bracelet. "Manila folder on the seat of Tweed's car. Get it if you have to steal the car." Fred turned to Braxn. "Guess I'd better go down—make sure the area's cordoned off. And have somebody grind out a short speech for me to give to the reporters.

"I imagine Tweed's too old for another transplant or implant."

"Probably."

"Hopefully," Braxn whispered. The two of them went off to the elevator.

Other members of the cortege were standing around, speaking in low murmurs, mostly French and English. The scene had the quality of a theater-of-the-absurd funeral—as if a state figure had died on cue, rows of black limousines and platoons of mourning dignitaries already arranged for. Or as if the body had been on the way to its hearse and had been carelessly dropped on the sidewalk.

The only man not dressed in black was the White House physician, who wore a conservative twill one-piece. His oxblood coverall didn't look out of place. Braxn had a mental image of a tribe of savages mourning their newly dead prince, red daubed witch doctor speeding his soul to wherever.

"Any chance?"

"No, Mr. President. He's been on borrowed tissue for fifteen years. At his age, with his habits, it should have worn out long ago."

Braxn looked at the old man he had just fought with and killed. Grayish skin, blue lips pulled open in wide surprise, eyes red slits where somebody had closed them—the hands were dead white claws on scrawny chest. The smell of cheap cigar smoke competed with embarrassing evidence of final peristaltic surge.

A ground-car ambulance pulled up over the front lawn. After it had taken away the body Braxn entered the limousine directly behind the hearse and led the cortege off across the river.

(Not to surprisingly, even after a lifetime of scrupulous churchgoing, Tweed admitted in his will to having always been an atheist and wanting no part of the barbaric practice of having his bones planted in magic ground. He preferred antiseptic cremation—his ashes were to be scattered in the Potomac by his lifelone companion, chauffeur and manservant, Harry Doyle. Unfortunately, the Environmental Services Commission pointed out, that rite was against the law. Gently

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but firmly it reminded Tweed's estate that the Potomac is not the Ganges. At least not in Washington.

(Of course, the Potomac also runs through Maryland on its course to the Chesapeake Bay. So Harry was dispatched with the urn to nearby Charles County and Indian Rock to scatter Tweed's ashes not so very far downstream from his beloved Capitol.

(Harry, who had always hated the old man's guts, got as far as Waldorf, where he flushed the ashes down a toilet in the men's room of a Gulf station. Then he drove on to Indian Rock and drank a sixpack while watching the Potomac flow sluggishly by.)

III

THE tea following the funeral, went quite well. The dinner afterward—attended by enemies, switch-hitters and the unaligned —was occasionally marred by dignified argument, strained through the teeth.

During the tea the Pakistani ambassador implored Harriman to sign the draft bill. Braxn told him bluntly that the bill in its present form, tripling the draft call, would put a severe strain on American manpower. Besides, it would be political suicide—a Gallup taken the week before showed that 39% of Americans wanted us to withdraw the 75,000 advisors already there and 11% wanted us to throw our support over to Tibet.

Braxn vetoed the bill the next day, as almost everyone but Tweed had expected.

A compromise bill, doubling the draft quotas, had been introduced earlier. It fizzled out by negative vote on engrossment and third reading.

The third and final draft bill was a complicated mess of new apportionment criteria, full of obfuscatory rhetoric and pages of figures. But if you sat down with a blue pencil and an adding machine you found it boiled down to another compromise.

"This bill—" Braxn tapped the folder with a pencil, "is about the best you're going to get out of this Congress. I'm not sure that you'll get even this, though. I, for one, need more justification than Pakistan."

"You've got it, sir." The man who said it was a burly, bullet-headed, craggily handsome soldier with so many stars on his shoulders that he had to call only one man "sir."

"The general's right, Mr. President." The secretary of defense was a slim, bland-looking man who looked as if he might be an insurance executive or the dean of a small law school. He had in fact been both. He had never been a soldier. "We realize you probably haven't had time to read the entire report—"

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"I've read it. I'm still not convinced."

"Well, it convinced me," the secretary said. "We've got to think of the future—"

"—in the light of the nineteen-ninety-five Geneva Accords especially," the general interrupted. "We're going to be headed for bad trouble if—"

"Wait, wait," Braxn waved a hand at both of them. "I understand the argument. You assume there will never be another Two Chinas War—that the Geneva Accords forbidding the use of certain weapons in international conflict make our technologically oriented weaponry obsolete. That we ought to retool down, train fewer troops—no troops eventually—in the use of sophisticated weapons. We must, in effect, 'detoxify' our military."

The general snorted loudly, recovered himself, hastily made answer in an urgent voice.

"Sir, that's not it at all. Begging your pardon, sir—we plan to keep the modern weaponry in the event that the Accords break down. But more and more men have to be allotted to infantry and regular artillery if we're going to be able to cope with these brush-fire wars between small countries."

"And to be frank about it," the secretary said, "we need Pakistan. We need to not only stay there but increase our involvement—otherwise we aren't going to have the nucleus of experienced men and officers we'll need if a real war comes up."

"I think you're both unduly alarmed. General, approximately what percentage of our forces are combat veterans?"

"Well, sir, damn it, nearly sixty per cent. But that doesn't mean anything! Most of those men got their combat experience in the Two Chinas War. You can't blame them for thinking in terms of nukes and lasers and disruptors—not bullets and C-six lousy five-hundred pound bombs! They're just plain ill-equipped—"

"Then haul 'em back and teach 'em, General! Oh, hell—" he tossed the pencil down on the bill—"I assume you both know that this bill is going to pass whether I veto it or not. By the narrowest of margins, of course—the Senate wants a stronger military, but it doesn't want to seem hawkish to the folks at home. To the people who are going to be drafted.

"I'll think about it. I'll *keep* thinking about it. Gentlemen, I hate to seem abrupt, but we just aren't getting anywhere. Besides, I have some very important handshaking to do."

Both men rose. "Well, thank you for taking time out to listen to us, sir," the general said. "Again I urge you to—"

Braxn cut him short with a wave and a smile. "I may. Goodbye."

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AS SOON as the men disappeared Braxn took out his pen and looked at the document without seeing it. *I wonder if either of them understands,* he thought, *that it's not really a military question at all.* His problem had to do with his relations with Congress. Since he had gotten to the Presidency essentially through a governorship, Harriman did not have many real friends in the legislature. They were testing him with this bill, knowing there would be a lot of noise when the public deciphered it and found out that it meant larger draft calls all around. He could make them pass it over his veto and come out lily-white. Or he could sign the damn thing and take some of the heat off Congress.

The old-fashioned flatnib fountain pen scratched loudly on the parchment. *Anachronisms*, Braxn thought and punched his secretary's desk.

"Send in the Scouts and feed me the speech, Joyce." He turned up the gain slightly on the receiver built into his eyeglass frame. The Boy Scouts were his last formal appointment of the day.

He gave it about ten minutes, parroting the words and actions that his secretary fed to him. Twelve Eagle Scouts in full regalia, their scoutmaster in mufti, registered attention and respect. Braxn amused himself by imagining what the spindly little man would look like in the traditional shorts and a Teddy Roosevelt hat. From Harriman's memory he dragged up a half-century-old image of Wally Cox playing Mr. Peepers.

After the Scouts had gone he punched Fred's combination.

"Oh, hello, sir."

Without preamble: "I signed the goddamn thing."

Fred nodded soberly. "No choice, really. Let's hope Congress handles it right."

"Well, I'm knocking off for the night." Braxn reached for the switch.

"Oh wait, sir, just a second. One thing might not be going too—"

"Too well?"

"Well—yes, that's the word. One of my men got the dossier on Tweed, slipped it off the back seat of the limousine while everybody was watching the old man die. I checked it over, though, and the last page is missing. A Xerox of an old photostat of his Army psychiatric profile."

"You rechecked the car?"

"We took the damn thing apart a couple of hours ago. No sign."

"I guess we just sit tight. What about the helicopter pilot?"

"No sweat. We found him this morning holed up in a fleabag hotel in Philadelphia. He was scared, sir, almost out of his mind. He was sure we'd killed Tweed and were after him. We persuaded him otherwise."

"You were not too convincing, I hope."

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"Naturally not. We also purchased the article from him, just as a safeguard. Ten thousand bucks—about a tenth what he was going to get. Took the money out of the party's campaign fund—chalked it up to 'ghost writing.' "

"All this and a lousy sense of humor, too."

"Yes, sir," Fred said with a little smile.

BRAXN returned the draft bill to its black leather case and gave it to his secretary on the way out, instructing that a courier run it over to the Speaker's office.

Braxn's wife met him at the door, trading him a glass of chilled Tavel for his coat.

"Hard day today, dear?"

"Humph." He sat down in an overstuffed recliner. "Conferences. Audiences. Two secretaries, Four Congressmen, a general, two ambassadors and twelve Macedonians in full battle array. Actually, I think they were Boy Scouts."

"Sounds exciting."

"It was. I must have woken up twice. What's for dinner?"

"Oh, Rosa's fixed something special. A secret." She spoke into her watch. "Rosa? When can dinner be served?" She put the watch up to her ear. "Whenever you're ready, dear," she said to Ross.

He had picked up a copy of the *Star* nitefax. He refolded it along the original crease and tossed it down. "Let's go. I could eat a can of dog food."

"That won't be necessary for a while, I hope."

While they were walking to the dining room the world shimmered and split again.

It was dawn in Barisal, the least likely time for an ambush. Besides, most of the fighting had been confined to the city proper, so the Americans . . . *we'd been so glad to get out of those damn streets . . . let them fight for their own city . . . who said this goddamn patrol was gonna be a picnic?*

"Is something wrong, dear?"

"No, I—I just stood up too fast. Drinking too much coffee—not enough sleep, I guess."

Christ did we ever walk into a classic box . . . From three sides heavy .65-calibers sprayed tiny anvils, making a ceiling of lead never more than three feet off the ground. Men were screaming in pain to the left and right and just ahead Lieutenant Hernandez was thrashing around in the elephant grass with a sucking chest wound . . .

"Excellent," Braxn said, chewing mechanically. "Tell Rosa I wouldn't trade her for a majority in Congress."

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"Take it easy, Lieutenant—I said take it easy—there." He got the man to stop squirming long enough to stop the sucking with the plastic from the bandage wrapper. *Okay, now the bastard's chest might fill up with blood but at least I won't have to listen to it . . .*

"Well, if any of the loyal opposition comes by, we'll tell 'em it's Taiwan Duck—"

Now the bandage over the plastic and run strings behind the lieutenant's back . . . *God, they could have made these strings a little longer . . . where the hell is a medic?* "Ten-six! Ten-six, goddamn it!" Down flat, burst of fire seeking out his voice . . .

"You really do seem distracted, dear."

Braxn took off his glasses and polished them with his napkin. "Really nothing, Linda—but I wonder if you could get me an aspirin?"

Captain Brown crawled up through the fog and smoke, moving on his back like a swimmer trying to do a backstroke with his shoulders. "Fall back and get me a medic." His left hand cradled his right, blood gushing from the stump of a thumb. "Hernandez KIA?"

Jesus Christ, by the book all the way . . . "Not yet, sir. Just about."

"No wonder we haven't got any support, get me his maps, they're in the right leg pocket. Then get that—"

Braxn stared at a forkful of rice, then levered it into his mouth. "Oh, thank you dear." He washed the tablets down with ice water.

The medic was in a shallow depression behind a stand of saplings, bandaging a tall black flanker whose lower jaw was shot off. Thick blood drooled around the pressure bandage.

"Doc—the captain's bleeding pretty bad from a hand wound and Lieutenant Hernandez got shot in the chest—"

"Mother musta stood up—"

A burst of machine gun fire rattled through the saplings. The medic cringed down, but the big black just lay there, eyes filming. Doc pushed a morph-plex syrrette through the dying man's sleeve, blood-slick and shiny. "Let's go."

"—just a combination of a headache and a stomach ache."

"Maybe you shouldn't be taking aspirin, then."

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An artillery spotting-round popped maybe two hundred meters away. The captain was lying beside a dead radioman, talking on the horn while he looked at the map. "Drop one-zero-zero and fire for effect, one-two over and out." He hung up. "You fellas better dig a deep hole. That's comin' in right on top—"

"Oh, *now* look! You've got that orange sauce on your sleeve. Let me take some cold water to it before it sets."

She patted the stain. "Are you sure you're feeling all right?" she asked nonsensically.

O—God . . . Jesus Christ, make it stop . . . The ground fell away and slapped back, twice, four times—so loud you didn't hear it with your ears but with your lungs and guts and bones and balls . . .

Braxn rose from the table and supported himself with a hand on the chair back. "I'm going to lie down for a while."

"Let me come rub your back."

"No, finish supper. I'll just lie—"

"Ten-six—Doc! Ten-six?" *Wonder why it doesn't hurt . . . I always thought it would hurt so much but you can't put 'em back in . . . they keep slipping around and between your fingers almost no blood . . .*

Braxn closed the door to the bedroom and stretched out on the antique bed. *Don't attempt to use freely your ability to transfer personality . . . share the dangers of another body . . .*

. . . so weak Holy Mother of Mary . . . no I'm not gonna . . . I don't wanna . . . God, God it hurts . . . maybe some dirt on my hands . . . they won't slide out so easy and I can stuff . . . Holy Mary, it hurts . . . what's the use . . .

Not as easy as it used to be but the involuntary telepathic link helps—push . . .

BRAXN was lying in a stand of elephant grass, gray-white smoke clinging to the ground around him, soft yammer of battle sounds whispering in his ears. Bluish intestines spilled through a foot-wide wound in his abdomen.

He willed his hands sterile and carefully rolled the guts back into the abdominal cavity. With his fingers and his mind he debrided the wound and held the bloody lips of it together for a few seconds until it healed. He cleansed himself internally against peritonitis, then fixed the broken eardrums.

Now for the larger problem.

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Could he still affect the rate of subjective time flow? He concentrated on slowing down this little corner of the universe. Make it lazy. Come on, Reality, isn't it hard to support a war? So much noise and confusion. Easier just to let it all . . . run . . . down . . .

A machine gun about ten meters in front of him was firing at a hysterical cyclic rate—*dubdubdubdub*—belt-fed, rattling off a thousand rounds per minute. After about a hundred rounds it started to signal the results of Braxn's efforts.

Dubdubdub - dub - dub—dub—dub, doob, doob. . .doomb. Thud.

Braxn stood up and walked through the grass to the machine gun. He was halfway there when a bullet crawled through the air toward him, moving with the speed of an overfed bumblebee. He caught it between two fingers and lifted it—it was heavy with fossilized kinetic energy—and released it above his head. It glided on.

Another bullet was just coming out of the muzzle when he reached the gun. He swatted the slug into the ground. No wonder the gunner had been firing hysterically—a piece of shrapnel had hit him in the face and spirited away his nose and half a cheek. He was in profound shock and dying.

Braxn took the necessary elements from nearby plants and insects and a pinch of dirt and fashioned the man a new nose and cheek. Of course, it wouldn't look exactly like his old one, but at least it was consistent with Pakistani somatotypes.

The gunner's loader, the man who keeps the belt of ammunition feeding into the gun, was splayed out behind the gun with an ugly wound in his throat. Braxn healed the hole in the trachea, closed the wound in the neck and teleported the inspirated blood out of the man's lungs. Then he visualized the bolt of the machine gun and made the firing pin disappear. He started to wander through the battle area.

A hand grenade hung suspended in midair, imperceptibly rotating and falling. Braxn plucked it out of the air and unscrewed the top assembly. He snapped off the blasting cap inside, then screwed the thing back together, its firing mechanism useless, and let it continue on its way.

In all, Braxn deactivated sixty-three rifles and pistols and four machine guns, eighty-one hand grenades and two grenade launchers. He revived seven dead men and healed the wounds of fourteen others. One person, who had evidently sustained a direct hit from an artillery shell, he had to leave the way he found him—there were no pieces larger than a section of liver to work with. The all-important brain cells were disorganized and scattered over an eight-meter radius.

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Braxn returned the soldier's body to the stand of elephant grass. As a final touch he cleaned all of the blood and smoke from the battleground. He laid down and *pushed* his persona back into Harriman's body.

Ugh, what's that—of course, of course—this body's dead—or at least not alive. It wasn't alive when I took it over. What a bother—have to reprogram the brain . . .

So quiet all of a sudden . . . wait! I was hurt, I was dying but O God, sweet Jesus . . .

. . . must be careful in the future—if I leave this body again—not to leave it too long. It'll start to smell . . .

"I know, goddamn it, I can't get mine to work either—stop those bastards—"

BRAXN stood up Harriman's body and experimentally wiggled it around and stretched. Everything seemed to be in order, but numb and aching. He shuffled back into the living room. Linda was sitting on the couch, not-reading a magazine.

"Oh, Ross. You look just awful—come put your head on my lap." Braxn did so to humor her, found it felt good. "I checked on you while you were sleeping. You looked so—well—so *bad* that I called Dr. Dean."

"Ah. Well. It's not that serious. But—" Braxn closed his eyes and shook his head. "The bill."

"What was that, dear?" Linda was stroking his forehead with a cold wet napkin.

"The draft bill. I shouldn't have let it through."

"Didn't you veto it day before yesterday?"

"No. That was a different one, not as sneaky. This one just reapportions various Selective Service districts."

"But it still increases the draft?"

"Overall, yes. Lowers it in some noisy districts."

Linda dipped the cloth in water again. "Well, I agree. You should have vetoed it—those poor boys. Don't you remember how you felt after—"

"Yes. Yes, I remember." He squeezed a hand over his eyes. "Maybe that's what's bothering me. But the situation is more complicated than that. If I had vetoed that bill I'd get nothing—absolutely nothing—out of this Congress for the rest of my term."

"Still—"

"Oh, still, still! You know a President can't do everything the way he wants, the way he knows is right, thinks is right—"

Dr. Dean came in, followed by a worried-looking Rosa.

"Good evening, Linda, Ross." He moved a chair over beside the

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couch and sat down. "What seems to be the trouble?"

"It's nothing, Joe. Really there is noth—"

"He almost fainted at the dinner table, Doctor."

"Linda . . . just a combination of not enough sleep and too much coffee."

"Well, roll up a sleeve and I'll check the hydraulic pressure." Dean wrapped a slender tape around Braxn's arm and checked the numbers on a digital readout in his bag. "Normal. Pulse a little low, but nothing to worry about. Here." He peered at Braxn's retina with an ophthalmoscope. "Yes, it definitely is an eye." He checked knee-jerk reflexes and took a blood sample.

"I'll put this juice in the mix-master upstairs. Don't expect to find anything, though—I think your diagnosis was correct, Dr. Harriman. Fatigue, possible over-dose of caffeine and nicotine. Taking any other drugs?"

"Not since those uppers you gave me last week."

"Last ones you'll get, too. Take my advice, Ross, and try to cool it a little bit. These eighteen-hour days are driving your staff crazy. Besides, you're stuck with this job for three more years, maybe even seven. You won't make it to election year unless you slow down."

"Hogwash. I've never felt better in my life."

"I wish you knew how many people have said that to doctors and keeled over dead the next day. Your mind thrives on work, Ross, but your body is just the same old kind of inefficient machine everybody trundles around in."

"All right, Joe. I promise to sleep till six—at least one morning a week."

"Well, that's something. Linda, you make him stick to it."

IV

THE next morning Braxn strode to his desk and punched up the morning *Post*-fax. He found what he was looking for on page two.

SOLDIERS CLAIM BATTLEFIELD MIRACLE

BARISAL (WPI) April 21—At dawn today an American patrol based in Barisal was ambushed by a force of guerrillas, but the ambush was foiled by what many soldiers swore was a "genuine miracle." Only one fatality resulted from what the patrol commander, John Carrie of Dade City, Florida, described as "an initially hopeless situation."

Gen. Theodore Howard, commander of the American base camp in Barisal, has ordered a full-scale investigation of the incident, saying that (cont'd on B28, col2)

A note on Braxn's desk read: "Urgent you get in touch with me soonest—Fred."

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Braxn punched up Fred.

"What's happening?"

"Too much, sir. You know that missing page from the dossier on Tweed?"

"You found it?"

"It found us. In the person of Harry Doyle, Tweed's old chauffeur."

"Surely he can't—"

"Reconstruct what happened? I'm afraid he did. He knew that Tweed was reading something that we gave him when he dropped dead. Doyle tried to find it after the fuss slowed down and only came up with the one page. It had slipped down behind the seat."

"Did he say what he's going to do with it?"

"That's the scary part. He said he hasn't decided, but he didn't even hint about taking a bribe. He's a nut, sir, and he hates politicians—when he came to Washington twenty-five years ago, he had political ambitions, took a job driving for Tweed just to tide himself over. Never got any further."

"What a mess." Braxn stared into space for a second, then lit a cigarette. "Any ideas?"

"Yes, sir. We could pull Tweed's trick on him."

"Have him committed? Fred, this isn't nineteen fifty-eight. Where would we find an old-fashioned insane asylum?"

"Maybe Berne, Switzerland. The place is known simply as the *Institut*. It's a fairly new spa, but it has old-fashioned ideas, like total isolation of the patient until he gets well."

"And Doyle's case?"

"Poor fellow. He suffers from a really deep-rooted psychosis."

"I don't like it, Fred. It sounds Big Brotherish."

"I don't care for it either. But the alternative, the scandal, would be worse. For you *and* the country."

"We can't just make a person drop out of sight like that."

"Ah, but we can—all above-board and legal. His mother—she's sixty-eight, lives in Sioux Falls and is also a nut—would be glad to sign the papers. She tried to get him committed eight years ago."

"You're very thorough, Fred."

"Yes. We have a man in Sioux Falls with a Swiss passport and a German accent. He has contracts that give very attractive terms. He will meet Mrs. Doyle at a women's club get-together tomorrow. We also took the liberty of putting a little something in Doyle's dinner last night. He'll be heavily sedated for twelve hours yet."

"And if I give the word he wakes up in Switzerland?"

"That's correct."

"What about the rest of his family?"

"Never married, father dead. No friends to speak of."

"Okay, go ahead. But I have a feeling it's going to backfire."

Fred shrugged. "It seems tight enough. And it's reasonably

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humane. In the Eastern Bloc they'd just haul him in and shoot him."

"Well, in China, maybe." Braxn took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. "In Russia they would bundle him up and send him off to an asylum in Siberia. Or maybe Switzerland."

AFTER Fred had signed off Braxn leaned back and thought about yesterday's sojourn in Pakistan. He had learned nothing new about power through the experience. Presumably that was not good. He was stuck in this uncomfortable phase of his development until some internal mechanism told him he had learned enough.

Braxn resolved to make a minimum use of his G'drellian abilities, but he saw no real reason not to use them at all—his father had exaggerated, as usual. The one thing he had to remember was not to be "away" from the Harriman body for too long at a stretch.

Which brought up an interesting question. His father had said he could die here if Harriman died. But the body had been unquestionably dead when he had returned to it and the fact had caused him no great difficulty. His danger had to lie in being *inside* a body when it died—Harriman's or anybody else's.

He would be careful.

DURING the next week Braxn went through the involuntary "dual-life" phenomenon daily.

As the result of a bill approving the (further) devaluation of the dollar he lived with a Mexican peasant who had been making a marginal income by working in Laredo, Texas, and crossing the border back home every night. When the value of American currency went down he found that his paycheck no londer provided a marginal living for his family—even before his pay was cut to help keep his employer in business.

To cut down on welfare expenses, Braxn made it impossible for a family to get food stamps if the total annual family income was over 21% of average U.S. family income per adult member, plus $1000 per child. For a conventional family of two adults and two children, this was quite equitable. But Braxn had to live through the situation as it presented itself to a forty-two-year-old ex-prostitute trying to support four children, working as a custodian for an income barely above the minimum for a single adult. She solved her problem by teaching her twelve-year-old daughter a trade and finding old gentlemen willing to pay a premium for her services.

A bill terminating funds for a space research project made him share the body of a chemist, who couldn't tell his wife, eight months' pregnant, that he had been fired

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but instead filled a 500-milliliter flask with fuming nitric acid and managed to get most of it down before he died. Braxn was unable to help him and barely succeeded in saving his own life.

A Presidential directive ordering energy workers in New York City back to work resulted in a brief but bloody shootout between the "loaf-ins" and the National Guard. Braxn got to "be" a teenage Guardsman who didn't want to live after an emasculating pistol wound in the groin, but did.

"ALL right, Mr. Secretary, you have about ten minutes. Start talking."

The secretary of defense lowered himself gently into a chair. *Probably has hemorrhoids,* Braxn reflected.

"Mr. President, my staff informed me only this morning of a very disturbing rumor—"

"It's true."

"Uh—ha-ha! It can't be true, sir. The rumor concerns a pullout of—"

"Yes." Braxn slid a five-page report across his large desk. "When I heard you were coming I had a copy of this made up for your enlightenment. You're getting it a day early."

The secretary picked it up without looking at it. "We—we're ending our involvement in Pakistan?"

"Correct."

"But only a few weeks ago—"

"I reluctantly signed a bill raising the draft call by a third—but not for the defense of a puppet regime and not so your brass hats can gain experience by playing soldier with the lives of American boys. The bill was to enhance our overall defense posture. Emphasis on defense—of America, not Zambia, Paraguay or Pakistan."

The secretary shook his head slowly from side to side. "This is a terrible mistake."

"No, this is the avoidance of a mistake. Almost every other country learned its lesson from the Two Chinas War. Time we figured it out, too."

Shimmer and split.

"Is it all right if I have another drink?"

"All right, Doyle, but I wish you'd try to get some sleep after we change at Kennedy."

"You know better than that, Mr. Secretary. China will be anything but happy. They don't—"

"I'm sorry, sir, but we'll be in our landing pattern in a couple of minutes."

"That's all right, thank you anyhow, miss." *Got to make my play at Kennedy. I'll never get another chance at that bastard Harriman. . .*

"What are you going to do

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with all that Army back in the States?" The secretary was up and pacing around. "Mark my words, without an actual war—"

. . . he can't clap me away in some looney bin fulla Krauts . . . "Smooth landing."

"Ja."

"There's no need to discuss this. It's an executive order and you may either comply or submit your resignation."

Short one that time, Braxn thought.

"I'm not resigning. Not yet. I wouldn't give you the satisfaction."

"Don't misunderstand me, Mr. Secretary." Braxn said smoothly. "I want you to stay on. I need men of experience and discernment. But I'm not Ashby. I have different ideas, some of which fall into your sphere." Braxn stood. "I'm only telling you that you can learn to work with me if you wish. Otherwise—the sooner you leave, the less prejudicial it will be to your political future."

"You'll be hearing from me, Mr. Harriman."

"I'll expect to."

ALONE again, Braxn stabbed a finger at the phone.

"Good afternoon, sir. What can I do for you?"

"Let me speak to Mr. Aller. Very urgent."

"Mr. Aller is in Chicago. I'll see if I can patch you through and punch you back. All right, sir?"

"That's fine."

Have to find out what's with Doyle. How did he get out and what's he doing in an airplane with a German? A Swiss?

Fred's image on the screen was of poor quality and rolling. "Yes, sir? What can I do for you?"

"Are you alone?"

"No sir, I'm in the mayor's limousine—with the mayor. Would you like to say hello to him?"

"Certainly. Phil. How are things going?"

A flaccid fat face filled the screen—"Not too well actually, Mr. President. The labor situation—"

"Ah, yes, I know—that's why I sent you Fred. He's my right arm and half my brain—in fact, I can't get along without him. Can you spare him for about an hour?"

"Sure thing, sir. Fred, we're pretty near your hotel—I'll just drop you there?"

"Fine," Fred said off camera.

"While I've got your ear, Mr. President—" Braxn half-listened to the old criminal for a couple of minutes. Then he said goodbye and Fred punched him from the scrambled telephone in his hotel room.

"What's up, sir? World War Three?"

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"Not till next week. Fred—do you believe in intuition?"

"Why? Did you get a flash about something?"

"Something like that. Maybe I'm all wrong—if so, I apologize for tearing you away from your pleasant companions."

"Quite all right, sir. I was getting cancer of the eardrum."

"Anyhow, it's about Doyle."

"Doyle?"

"Tweed's man—when did you last get a report on him?"

"Oh, that, that—haven't heard anything since they told me he was definitely safe behind bars. Sir, you shouldn't worry. He's lost to the world until—"

"Still, I *am* worried. Take long to check?"

"Well, we shouldn't call the hospital directly. I'll have my German call his mother first."

"Do as you think best, Fred. But do it fast."

"Of course, sir. We'll get right on it and punch you back."

"Fine. I'll be here in my office."

After a few minutes Fred came back on the screen, worried and perplexed. "Sir, it's weird. We tried to get his mother and patched into a funeral home. She died yesterday. My man's calling—wait—"

Fred looked to his left, evidently at another screen. "Damn it, they had orders . . . Has it left . . . arrived? Check the roster for the connecting flight—right." He produced a handkerchief and passed it over his face. "Sir, if you ever get another flash—listen to it. Doyle's mother died and the *Institut* decided that he was stable enough to attend the funeral and take care of the arrangements. They sent him to the U.S., accompanied by an aide. The plane—damn it—the plane landed twenty minutes ago in New York. My man's checking their connecting flight. It's pretty close—"

Fred looked away again and swore. Braxn was amused in spite of himself. Fred was always so cool. "The flight to Sioux City has loaded. They aren't aboard. I'll keep checking."

"Okay. I'll keep worrying. Punch me as soon as anything happens."

Split again.

Sorry to have to do that . . . he never hurt me he was always very nice. . . The jet noise tripled and he tilted back.

No need to worry. He's just one man, I have a whole army. . .

. . . always wanted a Weatherby. Buy me a Weatherby and a twenty-power Bushnell . . . get Harriman. Haven't killed a man since all those gooks . . . always wanted to kill a man on my own. . .

"Fred? What is it?" Fred looked pale.

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"Haven't found Doyle, but the police found his aide, Herr Kramer, his throat cut with a razor blade, in a stall in the—"

. . . except for Kramer, sorry about him, he was always very nice. . .

"Gin and Tonic, please."

Weird machine. . .

"—get hold of yourself. Get somebody to make an anonymous call to the police, say he saw a man with blood—"

They'll never catch me . . . have it all figured out . . . good thing the old bitch died . . . yeah, they'll catch me but after I do it I'll be famous . . . they'll hang me but. . .

"—and check the shuttle, the Washington shuttle, he wouldn't stay around the airport very long after. . .

. . . bigger than Khan, bigger than Oswald, bigger than Booth! That damn plastic won't do any good against a .658 Magnum. . .

"SIR, the shuttles out of Kennedy are fully automated, have been for two months. Not even a stewardess on board—just an automated drink tray. All we can do is watch at Dulles."

"Okay, set it up. Better watch Friendship, too."

Fred punched off and Braxn tried to concentrate on the thick report in front of him.

. . . to optimize all the ecological parameters, this committee decided to situate the experimental station first in a northern temperate rural region, then in a northern temperate urban region, then in . . .

"Mr. President?"

Braxn opened the line to his secretary. "Yes?"

"Your appointment with the secretary of the interior is in ten minutes."

"I haven't even finished reading the report. Look, Joyce, something has come up in Chicago, something important. I'm staying in touch with Mr. Aller, trying to keep on top of it. Cancel all today's appointments—tell everybody I'm not in." He stood up. "In fact, I won't be in. I'll be in my office downstairs."

"Oh, well, could you—"

"Yes, I'll go down the back way. Mustn't upset the secretary of the interior. I'm patching the outside line here, scrambled, directly to downstairs. Don't call me unless it's really important."

"All right, sir."

Linda was spending a few days in Wisconsin, visiting grandchildren. Her absence simplified matters. Braxn told the guard at the door that he wasn't in to anybody.

He poured a glass of wine and

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sat down at his desk, the thick report unopened before him. He stared at the telephone, then punched Fred.

"No word yet, sir."

"Nothing?"

"No, sir. The New York City Police are dragging Kennedy. All the airlines have his description. If he hasn't left Kennedy we'll find him soon."

"We? Or the police?"

"Sir?"

"If they catch him they'll hold him for homicide. He's sure to shoot off his mouth. Headlines for a week."

"Damn." Fred slapped his head twice. "I'm not thinking."

"That's all right, Fred. It was my idea to feed his description to them. What do you think the chances are that he's still there?"

"Well, it gets more likely with every shuttle that lands without him. Another hour at the most and we'll be able to say he definitely didn't—"

"—didn't take the shuttle to Washington or Baltimore. Could he have slipped on another automated flight before his description went out?"

"Oh, it's possible. The other shuttles are—let's see, Newark, Boston, Hartford, Philadelphia. Might be one to Richmond, but I doubt—"

"Any way to check them?"

"Newark and Boston probably have cameras like the one at Kennedy—takes pictures of all the people debarking from the shuttle because of the smuggling. I'll check all of them."

"Well, that's a start. Go ahead."

(Harry Doyle left the shuttle in Boston and caught a limousine to Cambridge. Knowing he couldn't buy a gun with Kramer's identification, he waited in a bar until he saw a man about his own age, height and build. He followed the man home to his apartment, rang the bell and when the man came to the door he slashed out with the razor blade—a technique he had practiced mentally a thousand times in Switzerland—pushed the silently dying man inside, was grateful that he was alone, took the man's wallet and memorized his new name and social security number, locked the door behind him and went down to the street.

(He called five sporting goods stores before he found one that had the Weatherby .658 Magnum, an elephant gun that was really overkill—even for elephants. He said he would be there in a half-hour and he was.

(It took most of Kramer's American money to buy the Weatherby, a box of shells, a case and shooter's muffs. When all the items were wrapped up in brown paper and tied, the package didn't suggest a gun at all. Doyle left it in a locker in the bus station, went to the public library, looked in Section B of

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Sunday's *Washington Post* and found the President's itinerary for the week. He would be present at the dedication of the new Peace Corps classes at Columbia, just outside of Washington. So would Harry.)

. . . our conclusions were that this type of EE station has an optimum balancing effect in areas on the periphery of an urban heat sink, but closer to the . . .

The telephone chimed and Braxn punched up visual.

"Well, sir, we got results from Newark and Hartford. The camera at Boston had been taken down for repairs. Nobody who looks like Doyle—"

"Any way to check Boston?"

"Not after four hours, sir. Big town with efficient rapid transit in and out. If he slipped through the Boston shuttle while the camera was down he could be anywhere on the East Coast."

"That might make things easier in a way. I guess we can assume he's crossed state lines pursuant to the commission of a—"

"The CBI?"

"Yes. Might as well. We have more control over them than over the police. Contact the CBI—tell them all you have that's safe for them to know. Tell them that Doyle is a murderer, is suspected of high treason and is armed and dangerous."

"And not to risk taking him alive?" Fred's expression was grim.

Braxn chewed a nail thoughtfully. "I think that would be best. Tell the director he can call me for verification. Patch him through your scrambler, though— Oh, and Fred, I'm going to try to take a little nap. Don't worry if you can't raise me right off."

"Okay, sir." Fred's image flashed to a point and faded.

BOSTON offered one obvious course of action. Braxn punched up a street map of the city and memorized it. Seven million people—it would take a week to check each one of them by body transfer. Besides, Doyle probably had left by now. But Doyle had been thinking lovingly about a Weatherby.

Braxn made contact with a policeman on the beat and—with rather more difficulty than last time, since he was not in involuntary telepathic contact—slipped into the man's body.

He found a public telephone and started going down the list of sporting goods stores in the area. People told his uniform, badge and beefy Irish face that yes, a man had called about a Weatherby, but they didn't have one in stock. The fifth store said it had just sold one, not two hours earlier, and gave Braxn the purchaser's name and address.

He took the cop back to his beat and transferred to another policeman who was on duty near the

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apartment of the man who had supposedly bought the Weatherby. He mounted the stairs of the apartment house and found the right door. A dark stain ran along the bottom edge. Braxn moved the lock tumblers with his brain and pushed open the door.

He investigated the dead man's brain and decided that there was still enough there to make revival worthwhile. He sealed up the jugular and the neck wound, transmuted a steak, a cabbage, two nails and a quantity of tap water into a sufficient supply of blood, then wished away the huge puddle of old blood from the Oriental rug and parquet floor. It took only a couple of minutes to fix up the brain—make the man an intelligent amnesiac. As he was coming to, Braxn tapped him not too gently on the temple with the nightstick to make it plausible that the man *had* been merely robbed.

As, of course, he had been.

Having gotten exactly nowhere so far—except to confirm that Doyle would murder without provocation—Braxn walked the policeman's body back. On the way he scanned the minds of various people to see whether any one had particularly noticed Doyle. No one had, which was not surprising. Humans did not notice much.

Harriman's body had been vacant for twelve minutes. Still, Braxn found it a chore to revive it, restructure the cerebral matrix, pull the poisons out of the tissues and get everything creaking around again.

He punched up Fred. "Did you reach the director?"

"It'll be another hour, sir. I talked to his administrative assistant, who is setting up tentative agent assignments. Of course, the director must have the final word."

"All right. I'll be working on the Peace Corps dedication. Couldn't sleep."

"Sir, um, maybe you ought not to make any public appearances until we nail him. He is desperate and—"

"Yes, I had planned to curtail my peregrinations. I'll keep my appointments in the Washington area and trust the secret service and the CBI. I've got two speeches in town this week and this one out in Columbia. The rest I'll postpone or arrange for a substitute."

(In order to look like a casual traveler Harry bought an old suitcase and filled it with newspapers and a supply of sandwich materials. Then he went to a trucking firm and traded a twenty-dollar bill for a lift to Baltimore on a big ground-effect rig.)

"JOYCE, who wrote this Peace Corps speech?"

Her image went off the screen for a moment. "Philip O'Hara, that new boy from Yale."

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"Tell him I need a rewrite. I want more about 'the Administration's changing priorities' and I want it worded so that young people will think that the Peace Corps will be an alternative to the draft, but older people will see it as just a two-year deferment."

"Uh, sir—do you know which it will be?"

"Something in between." A chime rang. "Have to punch off, Joyce." Braxn turned to the other telephone. "What is it, Fred?"

"Just a progress report. Little enough progress, but we do have the CBI's full cooperation. The director assigned a hundred and twenty-two men to the job."

"Good." Harriman had always been wary of the power the CBI had assimilated—it had had too much from its inception in the merger of the old CIA and FBI—but now Braxn was glad to have it on his side. Most C-men came close to their public image of remorseless, incorruptible automations. No man on Earth could elude more than a hundred of them for any length of time.

(Harry got off at a truckers' stop just north of the outer Beltway and hitched a ride to Towson. Five minutes later two expressionless men in charcoal coveralls came into the truck stop with a description of him. Luckily for him the waitress on duty had no love for the law—none at all.)

Braxn had approved a measure closing some loopholes in the Capital Gains Law a week earlier. He lived through two hours of a businessman's fidgeting, worrying, waiting for his secretary to go to lunch—whereupon he opened a window, stepped out and jumped 1459 feet into a busy Dallas intersection. An experienced skydiver, he aimed for a red convertible and just missed.

V

"WELL, Senator, I did wade through the report—" Braxn hefted the inch-thick volume—"and I agree with you. We need an extensive and uniform environmental monitoring system all over the country to enforce the Clean Cities Act. But your 'EE stations' will cost more than the public will be willing to finance. The figure of two billion dollars each, from state and us—it's at once too conservative and too much."

The young Senator was obviously uncomfortable. He had been railroaded into sponsoring this project, more on the basis of his lack of seniority than because he had evidenced any special interest in the environment. It was the first time he had sat in the President's office and he acutely wished himself elsewhere.

"Sir, we're willing to make compromises, but there's no getting

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around it—it's got to be expensive. Equipment below a certain level of sophistication just won't do any good."

"Compromise." Braxn put on his glasses and leafed idly through the report. "Perhaps you could make the distribution of the stations less comprehensive—set up the system first as an experimental project covering only a few cities. Of course the states chosen would balk at having to match funds—"

. . . turbine whining, braking . . . glad to get out of this stuffy cab. It's been a long ride. "Thanks a lot, buddy." *Get Harriman. . .*

It's Doyle!

"—and the state will get all its funds back, and more, from industrial fines—"

. . . gravel shoulder . . . big road, heavy suitcase, heavy package . . . truck roars off. . .

If I were alone I could get into him now and set him up . . . "Senator, I hate to cut this short, but—"

Where is he?

. . . got to get out into the country and zero this thing in . . . crunch on gravel . . . passenger groundcar . . . only fifty or sixty miles now to Harriman. . .

"—get together with your people and set up a couple of less expensive alternate proposals." *Get out of here, get out of here. . .*

"Where you headed?"

Don't know too much about this area. "West, man—just west."

"I'M SORRY you don't have more time, Mr. President." The young Senator was glad to get away.

The door whispered shut and Braxn locked it from his desk. *Fifty or sixty miles away, coming from Boston, wants to go west to "get out into the country."* Braxn needed no map to tell that Doyle was somewhere north of Baltimore—probably on route 95, 695 or 795. Somebody in a groundcar had just picked him up. Braxn started searching the minds of drivers in those areas.

The telephone chimed and Braxn stabbed it. The caller was Fred.

"Good news, sir—he did land in Boston and we know how he got out. He bought a ride on a truck that was bound for Baltimore. They're intercepting the truck right now."

"Good. Let me know when they find out—ah—if Doyle isn't in the the truck get back to me when they find out where he was let off."

Braxn continued checking. It took him five seconds to locate each mind and scan it superficially.

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He did a fast multiplication, decided he faced a day's work—too long.

Fred called back. "We missed him by a few minutes. Driver said he thought Doyle was headed toward Towson."

"Okay stay on it, Fred. I'm going to try to take a nap again Doc Dean won't let me take pills and I just can't seem to sleep at night."

"All right, sir. I won't call unless it's really big."

Braxn scanned Towson and decided to take over a policeman's body again. A uniform would take him just about anywhere.

He rode shotgun in a squad car for over an hour—going back every ten minutes to revive Harriman's body—before anything happened. Then another car caught a squawk to go check on somebody who was evidently firing a large-caliber weapon in a quarry outside town. Braxn transferred to that car.

It pulled up at the entrance to the quarry.

"Just some hunter, shooting cans," the other officer said. "We'll give him a warning and let him go."

Just then Doyle stepped around a corner, holding the piece of cardboard he had used as a target, elephant gun cradled in the crook of his elbow. He saw the two lawmen and jumped.

"Say, fellow, there's—" The cop saw Doyle bring up the muzzle of the weapon and barely had time to get his .357 clear of the holster when the first round struck him in the throat and severed his head from his body. Braxn made no effort to shoot. He was gathering himself to leap into Doyle's body when a bullet smashed into his kneecap, spinning him around. Miraculously he stayed on his feet for a moment, but fell over when he tried to put some weight on his left leg. Half of it simply was no longer there.

Doyle ran past as Braxn fell, Braxn *pushing* and *pushing,* but unable to free himself from the mutilated body.

This is what Father meant, Braxn thought. He tried to teleport the shattered lower leg back to a conjunction with the bloody stump. It shuddered but wouldn't move. *If the creature I'm inhabiting is hurt badly enough and starts to die I can't escape. . .*

His powers seemed worthless.

What a small thing, he thought as the world washed away to a white glare, *to die like this—to die a human. . .*

"SAM—" Braxn opened his eyes to a white clean room and people all around him. He was in bed and what he first thought was a defect of vision was a plastic envelope that covered his head—an oxygen tent.

"Sam, it's very important—

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listen." The speaker was the only man in the room not in hospital gear. He wore a plain blue coverall and was obviously a policeman.

"How much—" The man averted his face from Braxn. "How much longer, Doc?" he whispered to one of the other men. The doctor moved his head horizontally half an inch, then back again.

"Sam, you've got to tell us who did this to you and Halliday. Please!"

The doctor sighed and touched one of the nurses on the arm. She moved to Braxn's side, placed a pneumatic injector next to his skin and fired. A powerful stimulant blasted into the dying body and Braxn surged almost reflexively into the body of the plainclothes policeman.

He would have leaped on to Harriman, but another minute's delay couldn't make that much difference. He had revived men who had been dead for minutes—now the problem of reversing a case of terminal shock was just a finger exercise. He lingered long enough to adjust the body chemistry of his former host—neutralizing the fatal stimulant dose in the bargain—made a few subtle changes in various organs, destroyed a cancer that was just starting in the left lung and went on to the White House.

THE telephone was chiming furiously, but it took him almost a minute to get Harriman's body back into shape—it had been decomposing for a record thirty-five minutes.

"Sorry, Fred. I was sound asleep. What's up?"

"Double shooting in Towson. The description of the weapon suggests Doyle must have done it."

"Any witnesses?"

"Yes and no. One of the victims is still alive—they might be able to get a description from him. Luckily both men shot were policemen—when one of them drew his gun the act automatically dispatched a police helicopter—otherwise we wouldn't even have this chance for a witness. That's a terrible weapon he has."

"No match for the secret service and the CBI. Don't get uptight, Fred." Fred smiled at the archaic slang. "We'll get him. I have every confidence."

Maybe that would be best, Braxn thought. *Let them take care of it. I'm pretty safe in this body . . . best stay in it unless I get a direct line to Doyle. . .*

Braxn's man on the Ways and Means Committee had sent over a report outlining important forthcoming bills. He started on that. . .

(Harry drove his Hertz groundcar to Columbia and located the new Peace Corps school. He noted the position of the bleachers and drove on without stopping.)

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Tommy Tommy Tommy Tommy you wasn't doin' nothin' just walkin' down the street an' they shot you for doin' nothin'. . .

Goddamn your Tommy, woman. I need Harry Doyle . . . why can't I control this damn thing?

"He look just like he sleepin'."

(Harry Doyle parked in the lot behind an all-night drug store and waited in the car until it got dark. Then he stepped inside briefly to purchase a small flashlight and a bottle of fingernail enamel. Outside, he painted the lens of the flashlight with enamel, so it gave off a very faint red glow.

(Harry sneaked across a golf course to a water tower he had seen that afternoon. It was the highest point around. He found a breach in the chain-link fence and wiggled through with rifle, hacksaw and lunch bag.

(Using his light sparingly, Harry found the steps that spiraled up the side of the tower and he tiptoed up. A catwalk at the top ran all the way around the tank. From one point he could look down and see the faint pattern of light and darkness that was the new Peace Corps school and bleachers, not a half-mile away.

(On the far side of the catwalk, on top of the tank, stood a small shed he had noted earlier. It was unlocked. Harry went in, closed the door behind him and lay down. So he had carried the hacksaw all the way up there for nothing. Who would have guessed he would be lucky enough just to walk in?

"I DON'T *believe* in luck, Fred! There's incompetence, carelessness, somewhere along the line."

"They're doing all they can, sir. The director assigned another team —a hundred more—to the hunt."

"Maybe he's laying low for a while—on the West Coast or in Canada—"

"We have men there—and there. And in Mexico and Cuba."

(When Harry awoke a bright line of sunlight shone under the door. He ate a stale sandwich and sipped water from a canteen.)

"Almost time for you to go, sir."

"Thank you, Joyce." Braxn heard the helicopter engines starting, up on the roof. "Watch on the video and feed me the speech after I finish my opening remarks."

(He heard footsteps long before the man reached the shed. When the door opened Harry was standing to one side of it, rifle held horizontally, butt-first, at eye level. The secret service man stepped in,

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laser in one hand and flashlight in the other, and probably never felt the twenty-pound club strike his temple.

(Harry considered taking the laser, but decided it wasn't accurate enough at 800 meters. He heard the flutter of helicopters and crawled over the agent's body and started around the catwalk.)

Braxn looked through the window and saw the green field, the school and the bleachers slowly rising to meet him. He mentally reviewed his opening comments, going over modifications he would make according to who had or had not shown up.

(He crawled to his firing position just about the same time as the helicopters touched down. He put a handful of ammunition in front of him—the rifle worked like a double-barrelled shotgun and had to be reloaded after every second shot—and focused the scope on the door of the white helicopter.)

Braxn let two of the secret service men precede him, then he stepped out to the grass, Fred following.

There's the bastard! Breathe and hold, now . . . crosshairs on Harriman's chest. . .

Braxn jumped to the right
No place to hide . . .

. . . swing to the left—aim for the top of his head . . . not sure how far it'll drop but only has to hit his big toe and he's dead. . .

"You can die here," Father said. Jump left. . .

Swing right. . .

Fred caught Braxn's arm in a tight grip. "Sir? What's—"

Now. . .

Let go! "Let Go—"

The force of the bullet jerked Braxn from Fred's grip. His right shoulder erupted in a spray of blood and muscle and bone splinters. His body turned a half-sommersault in the air and he landed heavily just as the sound of the shot, rolling thunder, reached him. A second bullet dug a furrow inches from his head.

Lasers crackled and filled the air with ozone while the doctor did something to stop the cephalic and brachial veins and the brachial artery from oozing and spurting blood. He was administering a quick injection for shock when the third bullet whined past his head. The fourth hit a secret service man in the abdomen, killing him.

(Harry chambered two more shells and smiled. They might get

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him sooner or later but, as he had figured, those lasers just wouldn't reach. He put his eye to the scope and looked for a good target.

(He failed to see the secret service agent who had jumped back into the helicopter and now poked out the snout of a 6.35 mm Mannlicher target rifle. Harry was squeezing the elephant gun's trigger when the relatively small bullet from the agent's rifle fortuitously struck the end of his telescopic sight. Glass shards and the metal eye-guard slammed back, painfully putting out Harry's eye.

(He stood up raging, blood streaming from his eye, and fired two wild, unaimed shots before the second small bullet opened a bloody rose in the middle of his chest. The bullet passed on through and penetrated the metal skin of the water tank, and a jet of water pushed Harry off the catwalk.)

"SON! Wake up! This body is dying." The illusion of a friendly octopoid figure floated before Braxn's eyes, not quite as real as the bright lights and anxious masked people hovering over him, green tunics smeared with blood.

"It hurts, Father." The surgeon didn't look up, but one of his assistants turned bright eyes to the President's face.

"I know you are probably in pain," the prerecorded, hypnotically implanted image said. "Remember your learnings and ignore the pain. You may be able to escape.

"If you have learned enough about power—if you've learned enough from *both* ends of it—you have no further use for this body. Try to reach out and find another. *Try!*"

Braxn tried but the pain was too much of a presence, a crushing weight.

"This pain is not mine," he said aloud. "This pain belongs to this body." He took the thought and pulled it, stretched it until it lay over the dying organism like a shroud. The pain did not fade, but it slowly became less important. He reached out.

The surgical mask was rather tight and tasted slightly of lipstick. Its owner had scrubbed down in too much of a hurry. Good to be in a healthy young woman's body after that. . .

"Scalpel," the surgeon said.

With hands that were his and not his Braxn placed a scalpel into the doctor's waiting palm.

The doctor stood for an instant, the scalpel in his hand, staring at the cardiac monitor. "Heart team," he said and stepped back from the body.

A medic stabbed Harriman in the chest with a huge hypodermic, pumping adrenalin straight into the heart muscle. He counted seconds under his breath, watching the monitor while a beefy medic pushed

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rhythmically on the sternum.

Two men stepped to each side of Harriman's body—both held long wands trailing thick cables.

"Go." The men slapped the long electrodes on opposite sides of the body's chest, held him there for long seconds. The body jerked and twitched. A burned-flesh smell competed with the other odors, biological and medical. But no cardiac responses came. They repeated their efforts four times. Nothing happened.

Braxn knew they would be able to do nothing. Not much anybody could do in a case of death by spiritual abdication.

The last member of the heart team stepped forward with a set of chromium bolt-cutters.

"Crack the chest?"

"I don't think so." The doctor in charge of the heart team looked to the surgeon for verification.

The surgeon stripped the gloves from his hands and pulled down his mask. With an opportunity to say something that would ring down through the ages, he merely shook his head, whispered an earthy monosyllable and stalked out.

AFTERWARD, washing up, Braxn was still enough of a political animal to wonder whether that doddering old fool of a Speaker would have the grace and good sense to step out of the line of succession. ★

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She had a shattering solution for her problem . . .

CHANGING WOMAN

W. MACFARLANE

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SAN FRANCISCO (UPA) A spokesman for the UC Geophysical Group said today: "An 8.4 Richter with a Mercalli X-XI is not incompatible with observed effects, however localized. The San Andreas Fault goes out to sea at the mouth of Alder Creek, 85 air miles to the south. The so-called 'Red Lady' branch fault must be regarded as hypothetical, though stresses between the Pacific and Continental crustal plates. . ."

GIRL CLOUD-WALKING said, "A job on the California coast?" She turned on her high stool and looked through the window down the canyons of Chicago fading into quiet snow a couple of blocks away. She was a plump woman with small feet and long, blunt-fingered hands. Her hair was shining crow color and braided into a coronet. "They get a little hysterical out there."

"Birdeena Ora Oza Yadon, sweetie—" Her boss was hesitant.

"Are you using your forked or unforked tongue?"

"Deena, from us you get six months leave of absence. From the Mundy Foundation you get double pay plus all expenses. That's much wampum, my lady Indian friend. Work in big wigwam. You get food and lodging thrown in."

"Forked, I think. Maybe I'll phone Rand McNally for a job. What do you get out of this?"

"Nothing but trouble. You are the best collagist in the business, but Mrs. Arlis Mundy owns thirty-eight per cent of Aero Precision Survey. Who's to replace you? Do you know how much that eighty-two mile Indiana State highway was out? Sixteen inches."

"So how did they measure it? With a string?"

"They said laser triangulation."

"The benchmarks were painted fat and I have some reservations about that print-drying process. We've got to get deeper into the materials. I'm not sure the errors canceled. Now look, John—"

"Don't put me off, Birdeena."

She glanced around the room where she had worked for the past three years. It was familiar and comfortable to her—the tilted drawing board, the 4x12 table, the K&E tools, her desk with the calculator and phone and hideaway typewriter, the tall files and the ranks of flat files for air photos. This was a web of precision and rationality and beauty. This had been a safe and growing place.

"Well, John?" There were spiders that cast a silk web into the air and drifted off with the wind. She smiled faintly at the idea of herself as a fat spider flying to California.

"Hell with it," he said suddenly. "Let the woman squeal. If she don't like it bad enough, we'll both

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phone Rand McNally." He had a wife and children in Oak Park, but he meant it. He was a tough-minded Syrian with an appreciation of his own worth.

"Not to be hasty," she said. "Maybe it's time to go."

Girl Cloud-Walking never questioned the provenience of decisions forming themselves from the sum of her life. She felt no need to justify the quiet satisfaction of mathematics or her pleasure in the precise detail of engineering draftsmanship. Her father had been a high-iron man and followed construction. She had had a year of college in Virginia and another in Nebraska. When she had had enough college she had found this job in Chicago.

"Baby, you are so precisely my bag of tea I hate to see you go." He was troubled. "You might not come back, Deena. You might like it out there."

"Might," she said. "*How can I tell until I go to Cairo or Cathay/ Whether or not this blessed spot is blessed in every way?* Old Indian saying by Emily Dickenson."

"Sure," he said sadly. "I mean, ugh."

FOUR days later Birdeena Ora Oza Yadon flew from O'Hare to San Francisco International. She was met and made to feel a Very Important Person by the pilot of the Beech Queen Air, who flew her north along the coast and ducked under a rolling fog bank to land south of Cape Mendocino on an abrupt airstrip carved in the timber of a valley behind the first ridge, paralleling the fog-blotted breakers.

"What are you?" she asked the pilot.

"Almost a foolish man, but not quite. Otherwise we'd have to land thirty miles away." He grinned. "Blackfoot."

"Jicarilla Apache. My mother is Navaho. Friends or enemies?"

"Brand-new," he said and taxied the Queen Air to a hangar. "I don't think we ever met historically." He ran to a door and she sat with her hands in her lap. She could not see the tops of the redwoods behind the hangar in the drizzling fog. The great doors opened from the center. He fastened a towbar to the nose wheel and hauled the plane into the brightly lighted building with a towmotor. It was an amazing place with great laminated beams and enough shop to build a scratch airplane.

He carried her luggage to a four-wheel drive station wagon parked in front of a rubber-tire roller and beside a full-size motor grader. They drove outside into the rain and fog and he punched a code on

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a dash-mounted radio control. The doors of the hangar closed and the lights turned off.

"Extra special, first class."

"Well, what do you do with all the money there is?"

"Build a quarter-million-dollar hangar. Then you lay a twenty-four-foot asphalt road. That runs along the strip. That runs into a rain forest, that's what."

"Right on. You can afford spectacular temper tantrums."

"The Mundy Foundation is a temper tantrum?"

"It's my latest theory."

"What do you do here?"

"Oh, I'm airplane driver and head custodian—systems maintenance engineer. You'll stay warm at the house because of the dam and generator, two thirty-thousand gallon propane tanks and fifty thousand gallons of diesel. We got backup systems on backup systems. The last time I tried to figure, the investment in this hysterical complex was two point eight million iron men."

"Because Mrs. Foundation is in a snit?"

The station wagon shuddered as they left the forest and followed a cut through a ridge. The surf boomed somewhere in the fog. Rain lashed the windows. Scud creamed across the road in wavy lines.

"This outfit has paid me more money in the last five years than I expect to see in the next ten." He raised his voice against a drumbeat of rain. "I'm still going back to Montana and cowboy. Trouble is, I know everything about this place—but what it's about."

They drove into a wide paved area sheltered by rock walls and a roof. The asphalt was black with wind-driven rain. A door lifted in response to the radio control and they drove through a short tunnel to a garage. A dozen cars were parked herringbone around a glassed-in central office. A man stood by the door, laughing at another struggling into foul-weather gear.

"Hey, Marty, the bridge farside screwed up again. Mesi Stevens is stuck over there." He leaned against a red XKE Jaguar and pulled on his boot.

"Damn it," said the pilot. "We got to go underground with that line. Ed, this is Birdeena Yadon, new tech staff. Ed Fukahara, electric genius and troubleshooter." He introduced Birdeena to Doc Crowell in the glass office. He was a bony blond man with white snaggle teeth who said he would have a key and ID card for her tomorrow morning.

Birdeena followed the pilot to an elevator. "Who is Mesi Ste-

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vens?" she asked. "Is this a league of nations?"

"Mesi is our darkroom genius. All the people who work here are extra special. I'd like to know how much it cost to pick the permanent staff. They interviewed me three days before I skinned by. A fancy kind of selection and it sure works." The door opened to a 40x60 room, thick with carpet and interest.

"What do they choose for?" asked Birdeena, looking up at him.

"You tell me after supper," he said and led her through chairs and planters and bookcases and tables to meet the housekeeper, Rose Chiappetta. She was at the far end of the room with her finger on a switch. Soft primrose-colored drapes marched across black, rain-running windows. She welcomed Birdeena and took her to her room. It was luxurious and comfortably snug.

The people she met at dinner seemed curiously open to her, like moon-shot commentators revealed as perceptive men removed from the banalities of TV by the occasion and their own intelligence. Her new associates did not put on a front. They had sober self-esteem. They were courteous from strength and helpful and friendly.

And something worth knowing was the pilot's name. Martin Sanderson . . . might just catch . . . a plump little watermelon . . . out of the air—she smiled drowsily and resolved to continue her new negative response to the deep-frosted chocolate cake Paul Maniatti, the cook, made.

Girl Cloud-Walking went to sleep that night with a feeling of integrity and immediate security, like going up green in her mother's old riddle. What goes up green and comes down red?

She met Arlis Mundy next morning in the drafting loft.

ARLIS MUNDY looked like the Queen of Hell. She was tall and regal in a vermilion knit dress and soft, cerise, ankle-high boots.

"Birdeena Ora Oza Yadon, how nice you could come to work with us."

Birdeena was shy but not self-conscious. Arlis Mundy's charm put her at ease, though she observed the nakedness of the hips under the knit dress and the faint, miniscule awkwardness with which this imperial woman moved. It was an almost imperceptible flaunting of the joints, a ghost of hesitancy that might be taut control or a conscious check of wracking forces.

She took Birdeena through her austere office—orange and black and white—to a balcony overlooking an enormous cube of space. It

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took in one entire end of the building, five stories tall. There were no windows. The temperature was controlled and the humidity constant. A series of composite air photos were racked one behind another, flown from the ceiling on overhead tracks. To the left was a montage of weather satellite shots of the entire Earth, sixteen by forty feet, in a clever Homolosine equal-area projection, an intricately cut orange peel spread flat. To the right was the coast of California from San Francisco to the Sierras and south to San Diego bay and the Mexican border. The photos were mounted on high density overlay with plywood web support trusses behind. Girl Cloud-Walking felt the hanging panels were desolate, scuffed and pushed to discard.

They walked down stairs to the lowest of the three balconies. "Our project is to create the most accurate photomontage possible," said Mrs. Mundy. "The scale is one to three-sixteen-eight-oh-five or five miles to the inch." She hesitated. "What is your secret name, dear? We'll be working together for some months."

"Deena. My parents are not reservation. They called me Deena."

"Well then, Deena, reducing a curved surface to a plane has not proven altogether satisfactory. I'm told on good authority that a circle is a polygon with an infinite number of sides, so we shot along thirty-four degrees, twenty minutes from the New Mexico border west and laid the strip to the west as well. We reached the coast with errors obvious. What happened was not exactly what I had in mind."

Her hair was wheat gold, her face a triangle with a high wide brow. Her skin was white and smooth, her mouth small and crimson above a pointed chin. "There's no precedent for original research —obviously," she said. "So we shall try another approach with control inherent. This is it."

In the center of the floor was a dome fifty feet across, rising not quite five feet at the center. The precisely patterned circumference was eight feet off the floor.

"A representational slice of the Earth," said Arlis Mundy.

A carpeted platform projected from the lowest balcony. At the far end was a hip-high control standard. She stepped aboard and flicked a switch and checked a dial. She pushed a toggle.

The platform ran out from the balcony on triangular steel columns with a hushed purr of motors and gearing. It was dead steady. She touched another control and the platform sank to within two inches of the dome surface. "You might call this a plotting chair or a layout

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cradle. You'll be working off it." She flexed her knees. There was not the faintest quiver. She shook the control standard with both hands. No movement at all. She hiked her skirt and kicked a leg over the standard with a dancer's improbable leap and lash and faced Birdeena.

Her voice was level. "*Similia similibus curantur,*" she said. "Like things are—let us say—cured by like. The principle is, like produces like and the part stands for the whole. This is where we map the United States as it has never been done before."

She touched the controls and the platform rose and carried her smoothly toward Birdeena, who stood stolidly on the balcony as the Empress of Hell in red loveliness rode the air to her. She wondered why she had not seen the color of Arlis Mundy's eyes before. They had no color. They were gray as fog.

BIRDEENA YADON worked twenty-two days straight before Martin Sanderson lifted her chin with a curled forefinger and asked if she would like to go to San Francisco. "Avoid excess," he said. "If the Great Spirit wanted you to work all the time he never would have invented Saturday and Sunday."

She blinked like a woman half out of a dream. "Oh, dear," she said. "Mesi Stevens has Springfield, Illinois to do again. He doesn't know who slipped the scale but that's what happened. I was checking along forty degrees north and found it."

"Then let him grope by himself in the darkroom. Moderation is a lovely virtue. Let's go now."

She took a deep breath. "Yes, please."

It was a sparkling day as they taxied to the end of the strip for takeoff. She admired the tall trees on either side and asked why shorter ones had been left beyond the end of the runway. He said the brush down to the rocky riverbed was for contingencies, the trees for emergency.

"Life is very, very dangerous," he said. "You should try to maintain orderliness in areas not subject to control." He ran up the engines. "The wingspan is fifty feet three inches and the trees are maybe twenty feet apart. We land at over eighty miles an hour. If the brakes fail or power quits on takeoff, I have those trees to go between. Ripping off wings is one way to stop."

They took off and banked over the ocean. The Mundy Foundation was an architect's rendering on the shelf above the tumbling cliffs.

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The maproom at the far end was blind. Girl Cloud-Walking tightened her seatbelt and asked, "What degree of latitude is Los Angeles?"

"About thirty-four, maybe a little north. Why?"

"Earthquakes."

"We can do anything here just as good as they can in LA," he said, "but don't worry about our little home. It's steel frame with plywood in sheer panels. The rock on the outside is for pretty. It's a nonstructural facade with lots of rebar in it. You might tip over the Mundy Foundation, but it won't collapse. How do you like your job by now?"

"Cartographer's heaven." She said there was not a trace of expediency—unlike the experience of the old man of Thermopylae, everything here was done properly—though she felt like the top of an iceberg. An enormous amount of work had been done before she arrived and she was in the sunshine, sparkling. "I walk past all those empty tables and the dark communications center and I work in the drafting loft with only Nancy Kaneshige to help and we rattle around."

"Deena, I asked how you like it."

"Yes." She turned to face him in the high, thin sunshine. "Did you ever hunker down to look at the iridescent colors of oil on water? Ever surprise a skunk when the sun was low and the high fan of a tail was haloed black and white and gold? Were you ever really greedy with a box of your mother's chocolates?"

"Sounds like you have mixed emotions."

"I get a very Indian feeling out of this, those thousands of color photographs, the file systems, the loft, the layout tables, the arched assembly sections. It makes amazing good sense—until you wonder why." She said shyly, "I thought you were going to Montana and cowboy."

"I thought I might stick around for a while. Up by the border it gets mighty pretty by June—a very good month."

They separated in San Francisco and met for a late lunch at the Mark Hopkins. She thought the Top of the Mark very grand. It justified the chrysanthemum rust dress she bought a size smaller than her old size at the Emporium. She sat quietly by a window overlooking the world. She was deeply pleased with Marty Sanderson, hawk-elegant in her eyes. How well did she know him? She felt far better than she knew.

"How much does this cost?" she whispered.

"A couple of boxes of thirty-

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ought-six cartridges," he whispered back. "A case of ten-thirty oil." His eyes twinkled. "A small wiener pig."

They flew up the coast in companionable silence and Deena only raised her eyebrows when they did not put down at the strip behind the Mundy Foundation. "Thought you might like to see Humboldt Bay and Eureka," he said. "They massacred Indian women and children there a hundred-something years ago." She could not read his face as they overflew the sawmills and the bar and the long bay. "Get lots of rain. Better see it while it's clear." They banked over Arcata and flew south. "I've got an Indian feeling, too," he said. "If you meet a bear by mistake, the best thing to do is nothing. If that doesn't work, run away." He did not look at her. "We're mixed up with a crazy paleface, Deena. Maybe we should run away to Montana."

"Why the to-ing and fro-ing?" she asked carefully. "The best of both worlds is barely good enough for us—even if it takes maintaining order in an area not subject to control."

IN THE busy days that followed Birdeena took mental notes. She had not been so formal since college. What she wanted to remember, she remembered. What she forgot, she forgot. The notes were mosaic pieces she turned slowly in her mind to see if they made a pattern.

Marty Sanderson told her, "Mrs. Mundy leased six Constellations and flew in front of winter last year." Connies made the best photographic platforms. They flew the contiguous United States in east-west strips during September and October.

Paul Maniatti said, "Come on and see some day, Deena. There are caves dug in this hill behind us. We could eat for three years before we opened one sack of corn or beans. It's all refrigerated and the bulk stuff is CA sealed. Controlled Atmosphere, nitrogen or helium or something. How about a piece of cake?"

Mesi Stevens confirmed her opinion of the air photos. "I was with ESSA, the Coast and Geodetic for twelve years. They never put together a series like this. The planning took eighteen months. There were four men in the comm center with radio and direct teletype to field stations. Result—brilliant negatives, good overlap, no cloud cover."

Doc Crowell said, "The drawbridge works fine now. If you come back late at night just put your card in the slot and turn the key. It's pretty fair security. Park the

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roller and grader on the air strip and you need a chopper to get in. You can't land a boat at the bottom of the cliffs. On foot it's a long old walk in tough old country. A very careful setup. There's no such thing as complete security, but this comes close."

Nancy Kanashige said, "How did you guess? We are missing Cape Mendocino to Point Delgada. They're not in the prints or the duplicate prints and Mesi doesn't have the negatives. Do you suppose Mrs. Mundy has them?" Birdeena said not to bother yet.

When Martin Sanderson asked her if she would like an ice cream soda at Garberville she said, "Yes indeed I would." She leaned back comfortably on the car seat beside him as they drove over the bridge and through the woods to the rutted public road.

"Have you concluded any conclusions?" he asked.

"Human nature is neither good nor evil," she said. "What happens is what counts. You'd better take what people say literally. More often than not they tell you true. Do you know Marty, I feel all high-school girlish going for a soda?"

"That's too much to untangle at once." He pulled off where the road was wide. He put both hands on her shoulders and shook her gently. "Speak slowly in short words."

"Sure, Marty. Arlis Mundy doesn't like the world. She wants to do something about it. She doesn't like the United States most, because she knows it best. The *why* could be hubris and three unsatisfactory husbands. It's surprising how much time you can waste with *why* when the house is burning down. Hubris is overweening pride. And she is using the most advanced technology for old and dark purposes. Marty, I think I'll have a strawberry soda—"

He popped a smacking kiss on her mouth to get her attention and succeeded beyond expectation. It was Girl Cloud-Walking, who caught her breath and murmured, "Besides, she does violence to the principle of duality—oh, my goodness—men and women belong together and complement each other—" She surfaced again flushed and rosy. "So when the first good maps were being made, things were horribly stirred up and they called it the Renaissance. And with the blank spaces filled in—will you leave a girl no secrets?—the First World War came along. And air photography went on between the wars and a little more was stolen—"

"What was stolen?" he asked in a muffled voice.

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"The soul of the Earth."

"Oh, *no*."

"Yes. And things settled down again until satellites and radio photos and the air-caught film drops and especially those in color—when you come right down to it, do you think the people have souls whose pictures are most taken?" She had his attention on two levels and he slowly disengaged the action on one. "Presidents, ballplayers, movie people," she went on a little breathlessly. "I'm not sure television counts unless it's recorded—"

"Primitive superstition," he snorted. "Soul stealing!"

"Bad things happen. Did you hear about the airliner on the Kansas-Nebraska border? They blamed CAT. That means—"

"Clear Air Turbulence, I know."

"What you don't know is it happened when the very first montage was done. I'm extending from an arbitrary center, forty degrees north, ninety-eight degrees west. Arlis Mundy was on the platform with me. There was a fly buzzing around. I don't know how it got in. She caught the fly out of the air with a snatch of her hand. She is very quick. The plane did a cartwheel over Burr Oak, Kansas."

"I'm getting thirsty," he said.

"Marty, what are we going to do?"

"The second thing that comes to mind is Garberville."

"You don't believe me?"

"What do you want me to do? I'll do it."

"I want to get into Arlis Muncy's office some day when you take her flying. I don't think her flat maps correlated enough. I want a key. What I don't want is to see the rest of the country as far out in left field as she is."

"Birdeena Ora Oza Yadon, Girl World Saver?"

"It's not because I asked for the job—it's just because if I quit somebody else will put the map together. Honest and truly, I'm my-heart-is-in-my-throat afraid. Let's go get that soda."

SO WHEN Mrs. Mundy flew to San Francisco three days later Deena found the negatives in an orange-colored file cabinet. She took them to Mesi Stevens who said he would be happy to blow them up for her, just for the change. She hid the prints in the middle of Texas and returned the negatives. When Mrs. Mundy was away again, she made collage with all her skill and precision.

OKLAHOMA CITY (UPA) Earthquake at Harrah! Town devastated! Violent shocks recall 1811 New Madrid disaster!

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If Birdeena was patient, Marty Sanderson was not. The earthquake in the Midwest bothered him. He got Paul Maniatti to fix a picnic lunch and took Birdeena past the airstrip and up the road a mile beyond the dam. She was sparkling but he was troubled. They walked along the narrow lake and spread lunch above a pleasant cove.

"It's wicked superstition," he said.

"Have another piece of chicken."

"Deena, the earthquake's only logical. There's a banana-shaped belt running north-south from the middle of Oklahoma through Kansas into southeast Nebraska. Just because they had a Richter three point four at Oklahoma City doesn't mean Arlis Mundy had anything to do with it."

"These home-cured olives are good."

"Nobody believes you can steal a soul by photography."

"Seen any pictures of Howard Hughes lately? Marty, there are more ham sandwiches."

"You are out of your Indian mind!"

"Over you," she said shyly. He groaned in exasperation. "Tell you what, Marty. Let me take a sneaky peek. That unfortunate woman is up all hours and I've noticed things happen in the morning. Before dawn is an awful time if you've been up all night, hating."

"I'll make you a deal," he said. "I'll get the as-builts out of my files. We'll both take a look and see what goes on. I don't agree with you and I don't like any part of this—"

"I'm glad you can come," she said simply. "I'm scared."

The next morning he scratched on her door at 4:00 A.M. She was dressed in blue jeans and a black sweater. He had a roll of corrected blueprints in his hand.

"Here you are," he said, "but we can't go this morning. I got a call last night after you'd gone to bed. I've got to pick up a couple of Internal Revenue Service men along with the Foundation's tax attorney. Eight o'clock in San Francisco. I want to run a check on the plane before I take off. Okay, Deena?"

"Anything you want is all right with me." He grinned at her broadly, kissed her soundly and went out softly.

She studied the blueprints. She took her courage and her flashlight and went up stairs she had never seen before. She climbed a ladder to a black attic. There was a catwalk through a wilderness of rafters and insulation and steel trusses. Ducting ran like rectangular snakes. Every forty feet she

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came to a solid partition with a door. Bundles of wires followed the catwalk on one side, conduit and pipes on the other. The place was cold and black and quiet.

She opened a final door. Blocky, louvered shapes were droning. There was a *hisk* and whine of moving air. Stacks for the heating and ventilation units ran through the roof. A relay clicked and her heart turned over when a motor stopped. Beyond the machinery was the enormous, unpartitioned and solid-decked attic of the map cube. The trusses and girders were heavier. She stepped carefully over electric motors and gearbox assemblies. They were the support system for the overhead tracks of the vertical maps. She walked a line of nailheads with the utmost caution to a drum of cable.

She lifted a trapdoor. It was an inspection panel for the tracks. Then she lifted a two-foot square of ceiling module. She lay on her stomach. The view was puzzling. She moved away from the obstruction of the tracks and saw the sliced-off portion of the Earth way and away below.

It would accommodate the central section of the North American continent at the determined scale. In the very center were the color air photos of her montage. They took the shape of a webbed *X* with the corners filled in at Arlis Mundy's direction. Birdeena had been precisely on the Geodetic Survey's control points as they were plotted. It could be a handsome job, she thought rather ruefully.

Something moved on the blank world around the cross. It lurched with a horrible grace away from the mapped area, a preposterous shrunken midget, a child's drawing with a head and legs but no torso. The legs went front and back from her direct overhead view. The figure spun and leaped over the montage. It sank to the surface on the other side and stretched out with the head near the edge of the map.

It was Arlis Mundy. She wore an ice-green leotard. She crossed her legs and sat in ferocious concentration. Was she thinking hate at the world? Panic? Hysteria? She moved her head in a curious forward rocking motion. She was blowing gently over a corner of Missouri.

Half an hour later Birdeena stood in her shower and asked herself a little shakily if she felt like God, looking down on Earth. She dressed again and went for an early breakfast. The radio that morning had a news filler about the jet stream swinging south. Birdeena decided she was looking from Earth down into Hell.

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WHEN Marty Sanderson flew in with the IRS men, Arlis Mundy took them to the map room. "The spherical surface is built with the octagonal sections in question ribbed for strength and precision assembly." Each piece was turned to a thousandth's tolerance by a profile-milling machine. Yes, it was expensive. And it rotates and that wasn't cheap. The architectural engineers wrote the specs. Certainly other construction was considered, screeded casting plaster, a fiberglass section from a concave form . . .

"But the cost!" said an IRS man.

"The government is concerned with expense?" She turned her head away and Birdeena saw her instant silent scream—all the muscles of her neck corded. She resumed control and turned back to the men. "The contract, the earnest money, the progress payments, the receipted bills are filed in my office. My attorney will be with you. I won't." She left the room.

Birdeena saw Marty at lunch. He said Arlis Mundy inspected the Queen Air while he was out on the air strip, regrading and rolling a hollow. He told Birdeena he expected orders to bring an axe and fly east, so Arlis Mundy could chop down the Washington Monument.

When Birdeena went back to work, laying out nylon fiber paper on which the collage was tissue-fixed in curvature by a special dry-mount press, she saw Arlis Mundy in the comm room, speaking into a microphone.

Arlis Mundy turned off the radio and said to Deena, "I missed them on the ground. The invoices must go out today. Will you run this envelope over to the strip and give it to Marty Sanderson?"

Doc Crowell said he would drive her. They arrived at the hangar just as the Queen Air appeared over the treetops with flaps down, sideslipped and landed. Halfway along the field a cloud of mist trailed behind the right wheel. The plane stumbled forward on the tricycle gear—and did not slow. Crowell spun dirt onto the runway. He said something about too fast to stop, too slow to take off and it would sure as hell flip if Marty tried to turn. Birdeena folded the envelope of invoices and put it into her purse.

Sanderson chose to go between his trees but he could not mangae to hit dead even. The left wing tore off with a wrenching squall and leapfrogged through the brush into the rocky stream. The fuselage pivoted on the other wing. It

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crumpled. The stub reached for the sky. The wreck slammed to the ground. Sanderson flung open the door and threw out two men. They got up and walked dazedly. He hung a third out of the cabin, dropped to the ground and slung him over his shoulder. They all staggered away and were in a stumbling run when the gasoline hissing on hot metal went *whoomp* and a billowing ball of flame rose higher than the tree.

They tumbled into the wagon smelling of blood and singed hair and shock. At the hangar Crowell phoned the house and the U.S. Forest Service about the fire. Birdeena ripped a clean rag for Marty to hold on the jagged cut from temple to ear while she mopped his bloody face with a wet towel.

He said, "Ruptured brake line. Switches off but it burned. Too bad. Give a pretty to see if it was cut and taped. Oh, well."

She said, "Press harder. And be more careful. The life you save is not entirely your own any more."

Arlis Mundy braked her XKE to a stop and said she would drive the men to the hospital. Crowell would direct the fire crew. She drove the wagon with two men in shock beside her. Marty was in the back, steadying the unconscious man.

Birdeena mopped his blood from her dress. She watched a green pumper arrive and water down the wreck. She washed her face and hands. She got her purse and opened the envelope. It had invoices in it, all from the files, a year and a half old.

Dinner was quiet. Arlis Mundy came in and had a cup of coffee with the staff. She said one of the IRS men had a broken pelvis. The other was burned and the doctor suspected internal injuries. Her attorney had a dislocated shoulder and bruises and Marty Sanderson had twelve stitches in his head and was resting uneasily. He wanted to get out. She flicked her upper lip with a pointed tongue.

GIRL Cloud-Walking awoke at two that morning with a quiet heart. She dressed as she had the night before and climbed to the attic. She thought of Changing Woman, a favorite figure among the Holy People of the Navahos. Changing Woman taught the People to control wind, lightning and storms and how to keep all forces in harmony with each other. She developed ways of doing things that were partly practical and partly magical. Girl Cloud-Walking removed the inspection panel and looked at the world below.

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A naked figure was dancing there. All restraint was gone. It was a dance of indecent triumph.

She put back the ceiling panel. She replaced the trapdoor, returned through the attics and down the ladder. She walked the silent corridors to the loft. She turned on all the lights. Without haste and without waste motion she took the montage Mesi Stevens had blown up for her and fixed it together. She laid it out on the curved surface and the edges were lifted.

Of course, she thought practically. One of the large tables was very slightly arched. It should approximate the scale almost precisely. It was a brilliant color montage with every detail in fine contrast. She could see the airstrip, the road and the house. She fixed it to the table and shoved it into proper orientation. She clenched her fist above her head and

★ ★ ★ GALAXY STARS ★ ★ ★

W. Macfarlane—the *W* stands for Wallace—started reading science-fiction magazines back when an occupation of scientists therein was boiling down lobsters to a serum which, if injected into kidnaped heroines, would turn them into crustaceans. The job never got done—perhaps because the gals were made of solid wood—but it made for a sense of wonder. Indeed, the girl-into-lobster syndrome established a theme in the writer's mind: man's ability to bend the observed world to his fancy. Ever since that revelation from sf, Macfarlane has enjoyed a delightful life.

He grew up in Berkeley, graduated from Northwestern, accepted a pressing invitation to join the army, and has lived on an apple ranch in the mountains of San Diego county since 1946. When the apples freeze in blossom, Macfarlane turns to constructing worlds on paper—even though he believes the original is a magnificent system, designed to keep a thinking animal entertained for as long as it lives. He has been extraordinarily fortunate in his friends, who tell him about science and man and kindly leave him the pleasure of shaking the pieces into patterns. His wife is pretty and amiable; their children, vastly entertaining. Mike programs for Xerox; Docia is in Australia, and Sally illuminates the teenage world in high school.

Photo by Leighton/Berkely

Macfarlane is a modest pragmatist and a rabid middle-of-the-roader. He reads omnivorously and cheerfully admires critically unfashionable writers. He believes sf is a candle in a dark world of fixed belief, and that is why he writes it.

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caught her breath. She thumped the map softly. Nothing happened. She bent and blew gently. Birdeena straightened to listen —no wind at all outside. She kicked off her shoes and climbed to the table top. She bent and blew fiercely this time.

The door to the office slammed open. Hell's own Queen stood there in a fiery orange wrapper. Her eyes were a mad gray fog.

Of course. Girl Cloud-Walking understood. It was a matter of intent. In sorrow, in compassion, in absolute determination she brought her heel down on the Mendocino coast.

The building rocked and shruddered.

Changing Woman danced and the world reeled under her and the Empress of Hell screamed soundlessly and screamed again. She wheeled to her office, a shadow seeker from the light, and the desk charged down the rocking floor. The door slammed shut of itself and sprang open again. Changing Woman saw her through both open doors, standing on the balcony, then flying and flying—as Girl Cloud-Walking herself was flying from the table in the jolting, punching, rumbling earthquake. Mr. Richter would admire this one.

Deena was not surprised to wake by firelight. The electricity had gone with Arlis Mundy. The world was askew but steady now. The fire was licking at the photo files. Fire had no malicious intent. A door pushed open with a crash. Marty Sanderson stood there looking like the Sun, husband to Changing Woman.

Changing Woman dwelt in a wondrous house on western waters. She was ever young and ever radiant in beauty. But Marty had a lopsided bandage on his head and Girl Cloud-Walking said "Aie!" when he picked her up.

And she was content as he carried her through the shambles of the building, Birdeena Ora Oza Yadon, a safe little watermelon as the fire crackled and grew and roared behind them.

GARBERVILLE (our local correspondent) The energy released during an earthquake is sufficient to run a battleship at full speed for 46,000 years or raise a cubic mile of rock 6,000 feet into the air. "Nonsense!" says a UC Geophysical scientist. "It is impossible to put any comparative numerical value on a force that shifts 'solid' earth twenty feet vertically." He deplored hysteria and rumors that "exotic machinery" found in the ashes of the Mundy Foundation could have any connection with the tragedy that took the life of a great and generous woman . . . ★

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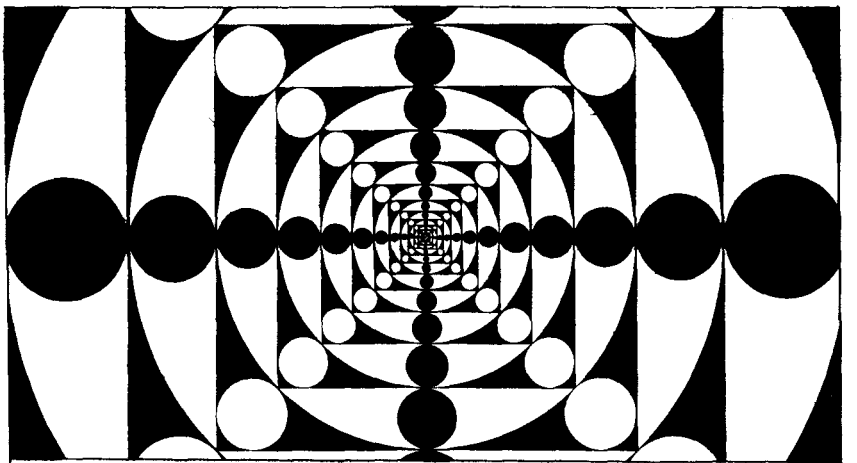

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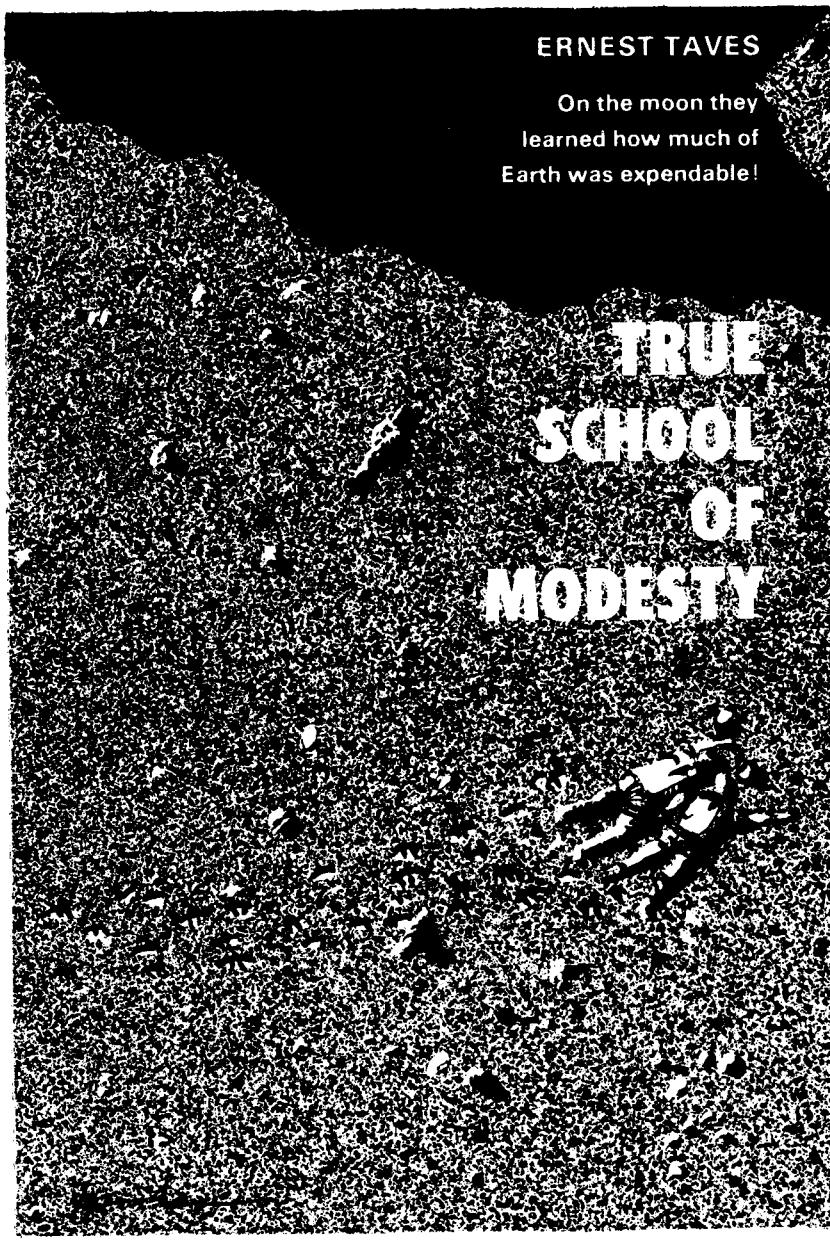

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"WHAT do you call yourself, then—a magnetologist?"

"There's no such word. Magnetometerologist would be closer, but there aren't any of those either. At least not in the dictionary."

This conversation occurred between David Groves and Gregory Ohno. Actually Groves was a geophysicist and his particular interest was magnetism. Magnetic fields of the Earth, their secular variations, things like that. In this case—the magnetic field or fields of the moon.

"Just about here, I'd say." Groves stopped the buggy.

This was Pegasus 4, and the men were in the center of a small unnamed crater near Leontievski. Unnamed, that is, until Groves decided to call it Peacock. The name had stuck. This was Pegasus 4, yes, and honest-to-God scientists were beginning to join the astros on the moon. Happy days for science—if you can forget Pegasus 2. It almost seems as if the Space Program were trying to make amends for that one. Groves and Ohno were both scientists and there was only one astro on this mission. He was Felton Ford and he was in orbit, minding the command module, Vireo. And all the astros *and* the scientists had had a bit of psychiatric screening since the splashdown of what was left of Pegasus 2.

For reasons of economy the scientists were semi-astros. Either Groves or Ohno could pilot the lunar module to rendezvous with Vireo—but they were scientists first and astros second. With Ford it was the other way around.

"Houston?" Groves said.

"Roger, Dave. Your seminar is coming in loud and clear." They had been talking for some time about nomenclature in different areas of science.

"Dullsville." That was Ford, from orbit.

"Okay, Houston. You have our position?"

"Roger. Suggest you initiate magnetometry program now."

"That's why I called, Harry. We're beginning now." Groves walked back to the nonmagnetic cart, switched on the magnetometer, checked the calibrations. The indicators showed nothing of interest, which was no surprise, but the pens were recording properly, tracing the first magnetographs made by a magnetometer moving directly over the lunar surface. Groves checked the odometer, took a tentative bearing on a distant minicrater and started the buggy.

"I don't get it, Dave. The moon doesn't have a magnetic field worth mentioning. Right?"

"Depends what you mean by worth mentioning. I told Leeds we

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should have more interdisciplinary briefing. I don't know any more about geology than you do about physics. As it happens, old buddy, a magnetometer emplaced by Apollo Twelve found a steady subsurface magnetic field in Oceanus Procellarum. This field was localized, not global."

Through his bubble Ohno darted a glance of interest. "A magnetized meteorite?" The look of interest was followed by one of outrage. "Why wasn't I told about that? They filled us full enough of the magnetic constituents of all the Apollo samples. That's another one the training program blew."

"Yes, alas. The Apollo Twelve anomaly is really more up your alley than mine. I guess you didn't keep up with your outside reading. Or put it down to the complexity of the program. Or to the brevity of the briefing. Or to the time we spent learning to be quasi-astros. Anyway, that magnetic field in Oceanus Procellarum is almost certainly not caused by a buried magnetic meteorite. Consensus is that it's a magnetized chunk of native lunar material."

"I don't believe it. Magnetized by what?"

"That's the question and you're right to disbelieve. Just a minute—I want to see if this thing is working now that it's in motion." The magnetometer was gimbaled and mounted with much sophistication. It had never malfunctioned in simulation, but that wasn't always the last word. Groves stopped the buggy again, walked back to the cart and checked. "Houston?"

"Roger, Dave."

"Magnetometer systems A-Okay. Random excursions of insignificant magnitude. Two gammas plus or minus small fractions. Will continue according to plan."

"Roger, Dave. Houston out."

Groves started the buggy. "Whatever it is, it could have been magnetized a long time ago by a close approach to Earth, of course. Within about three Earth radii would do it," Groves said.

"If that's so, then there should be other—" Thoughtful pause. "Oh. I get it."

"Right. That's one of the reasons we're dragging this device in a neat triangular pattern across the center of Peacock."

"Why can't the thing in Procellarum be a magnetized artifact?"

"Don't think they didn't think of that, old buddy. But the field gradient was too low even to be measured—and there was no field change when *Intrepid* went back up to *Yankee Clipper*. There would have been if that field were due to an artifact. The reasons are complex."

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"So. No *Sentinel* ?"

"Not there, anyway."

Groves glanced at the odometer, continued forward a half kilometer and stopped the buggy. "Okay, Greg. Station A. Do your thing."

THE moon soil was dark and crunchy, flat and even, sprinkled with rocks that were quite small, nothing larger than an orange. Groves checked the magnetograph. The squiggles were insignificant. Then he took a collecting bag and did what he was supposed to do to help Ohno. Looking for rocks of any size that showed striation, he began circumnavigating the buggy and cart at a distance of about thirty meters. Ohno took many photographs of rock and soil and, using selective criteria, collected several rocks.

Station A mission accomplished. "Nothing striated," Grove said.

"Me neither. I didn't think we'd find any. But we have to look—for the terrestrial tektite boys."

"Tektites aren't striated."

"Well, Dave, you're right about needing more cross-talk between the disciplines. Tektites aren't striated and we don't look for tektites on the moon, but we look, wherever we go on the moon, for striated rock. That's related, and again too complex to go into. Let's get going."

Groves started the buggy, made a 120° turn to the right, and they began the second leg of the expedition.

"Magnetometer okay?" Groves nodded. "Why aren't your data being telemetered?"

"I'd bloody well like to know that myself. I tried to find out but got a typical runaround. Some project engineer probably didn't bother to compare the weight of the polygraph we're carrying around with that of the hardware needed to transmit the data back. Who knows?"

Silence for a time. Then: "I've been thinking," Ohno said. They were riding the buggy.

"Mercy!"

"No, really. Why does our noble mission put down so close to that Russian lem? We must be within a mile of it right now."

"They told us all about that."

"Yes. I know what they told us." Houston was hearing all this—not that it made any difference. "They told us the geologists wanted rocks from very near that place, but not from right on top of it."

"So what's your problem?"

"Well, this is really my question: since we're so close—why haven't we been programed to go over and have a look at it?"

"Damned if I know," Groves said. "Houston?"

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"Roger."

"Being as how we're so close to that Russkie lem, why don't we go over and have a look at it?"

"We went into that in your briefing. No scientific value. Sentimental, maybe, but not scientific. What you're doing is more important. All right?"

"Just curious," Ohno said, as they continued to Station B. Ohno from time to time saw a promising piece of moon and asked to stop the buggy. Groves looked up at Earth now and then. Glamor and excitement on the moon, right? Magnetometer working well, film being exposed, collecting bags filling. Turning 120° and on to Station C, which is back where this trip started. Why are the Stations designated so? Ask someone back on Earth.

"That's it," Groves said, stopping the buggy. "I'll check the magnetometer and we'll go back to base. Not much time left." He crunched over the dark soil and scanned the polygraph. He stood there looking at it. He shook his head and sunlight danced on his bubble.

"Let's go," Ohno said, a touch of irritation in his tone.

"Come here a minute, Greg." Groves had unrolled, clumsily, a three-foot section of the magnetograph.

"How's General Motors?" asked Ohno. He had an interest in the market. He looked at the lines. He didn't have to be a magnetologist to get the picture.

"Oh, wow—"

"Yeah. Oh, wow."

"Dave?" Houston.

"Roger, Harry. Mission control from Redbird. Gentlemen. Approx halfway between Stations B and C we have hooked a fish. Not a very big one, but we've got something on the hook."

There was lots of conversation after that—and that was how we found Magnetic Anomaly 2.

Graves and Ohno had to return to their module then and the boys in the back room at Houston spent the next eight hours in hectic revision of the rest of the Program of Pegasus 4.

REPLANNING the mission was hectic because Pegasus 4 had just about run out of time when the anomaly was found. After completion of the triangular exploration Groves and Ohno were supposed to spend six hours in the module, eating, sleeping and resting. During the first four hours after that they were to set up a battery of instruments, including a seismometer, two reflectors to bounce back laser beams sent from Earth, a few other oddments and a top-

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secret black box with an on-off switch on one side of it and an adjustable antenna sticking out of its top. After that they had two hours to prepare for liftoff and docking with the command module, Vireo.

The six hours of sleeping and eating were necessary and went according to plan, though Groves didn't sleep much. All other activities, however, except for planting the black box, were scrubbed by the boys in the back room, a decision which caused understandable anguish among the scientists whose experiments were thereby canceled. The command decision was that Groves and Ohno, once the black box was taken care of, would spend the remaining available time collecting all the data they could with respect to Anomaly 2.

"WHAT's in this misbegotten box, anyway?" Ohno was impatient again and they were having trouble with the antenna.

"That seems to be classified. How now, Houston?"

"Back a trifle the way you just came from." Groves made awkward movements and swore. "Hold it. Now just a little toward the horizon. Easy. Little more. Now back one micron. That's it."

"Roger. And that's at least a half-hour lost to magnetometry. Let the record show that the means provided to adjust this antenna are ill-suited to the purpose. With your permission we'll now proceed on our business. We don't have too much time."

"No need to get sore, Dave. That box is important."

"What's in it? Put on the scrambler and tell us."

"I don't know, cross my heart, I really don't."

Ohno was firing up the buggy. This time he would be driving. Groves got aboard and they retraced their previous path between Stations C and B. About a third of the way to B Groves said, "Okay," and Ohno stopped the buggy. Groves got off and checked the magnetograph.

"Okay. Slow ahead." Groves walked beside the cart, watching the squiggly lines. *How come I'm more tense now than I was at liftoff?* Crunching over the dark soil. One of the pens began a wider excursion. "Here it comes. Slower." He thought of the last seismograph he had seen, though the curves were not similar.

Maximum. "Keep going." The excursions diminished. "Okay. Turn around." Back to maximum. No need to mark the spot, the tracks would be there a long time.

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"All right, this way." Groves indicated a path at right angles to B-C, in the direction toward the center of their triangle. Again the excursions diminished. "Around the other way and straight ahead. Houston?"

"Roger, Dave."

"How come this isn't telemetered?"

"Payload considerations, I think."

"Okay." They crossed B-C and the pens began to go off the chart. "Hold it one." Ohno stopped the buggy and Groves adjusted the range of the magnetometer. "Go ahead." There was some backing and filling and Houston kept telling them how much time they had left. Groves had to switch to another range before they sat directly over maximum field.

"This is it, Houston. Would you believe one hundred and seventy-five gammas?"

"The field gradient, Groves, the field gradient?" A different voice.

"Hello, Edmund. I thought you might be there. It will take some figuring, but it sure the hell is there. Not like Apollo Twelve, don't worry."

Edmund didn't ask if Groves thought they might have an artifact, but that was what was on his mind, and Groves knew it.

"Can't tell how deep it is yet," Groves said. "Be nice if we had a shovel or corer or something. Pity somebody didn't think to send one along. Well, we'll have lots of data to play with when we get back, Edmund."

"That's right. Don't get lost on the way, friend."

Capcom came on. "You have thirty-four minutes before beginning return to module. Suggest you—"

"I know, I know. We'll get back to work now."

They did so, collecting such data as they could in the time they had.

Pegasus 4 returned to Earth without, as they say, incident.

Pegasus 5 was too far along its own path to be diverted to Peacock.

PEGASUS 6 was, after controversy, diverted to Peacock for the more or less express purpose of studying Magnetic Anomaly 2, or MA-2 as everyone came to call it. It was not an easy diversion, since the scientists involved in the original Pegasus 6 program screamed like wounded eagles, but in the end it was not the scientists who carried the day. It was the romanticists.

Romanticists? Yes. The Pegasus 4 magnetographs were studied

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relentlessly by anyone who could claim even a peripheral interest and the consensus was that there was a possibility that the magnetic field was created by an artifact located approximately two to four feet beneath the lunar surface at the pinpointed site in the center of Peacock. Pegasus 6 wasn't going up there to gather rocks (though there would, of course, be some of that) or to make seismological experiments or to do anything much but find out, if they could, what MA-2 was. So, because of the possibility of an artifact the romanticists won.

Gregory Ohno did what he could to have a visit to the Russian lem included in the Pegasus 6 mission, but top brass said that was a no-no, a zero priority. If the Russians wanted a look at that lem they could send up their own mission. And everyone knew they weren't going to the moon much these days.

David Groves accepted with ill grace the fact that there was no way he could make the roster for Pegasus 6. His pleas had gone all the way to the top. No way. Slots in the Space Program must, in all equity, be passed around, must they not? *But I discovered* . . . No way. In any case, Pegasus 6 wouldn't have much to do with magnetometers. More like archeology.

"Needless to say, I'm more than a little pissed off."

"It isn't as if MA-2 is your personal property, Dave."

"I know that. But that is the way I feel, damn it."

Groves and Ian Scanlan, another geophysicist, were having drinks in a bar not far from the Space Center. "So what do you think it is?" Scanlan asked.

"Consider the possibilities. There aren't too many, after all."

"Right. There may be an artifact up there. If so, it comes from the solar system or from outside. If from our system, it's from Earth, the moon or other planet or satellite. If not, it's from outside. That exhausts the possibilities."

"That's right, old buddy. A simple-minded statement that doesn't say very much, but it takes care of the geography. How about trying for the why?"

Scanlan ordered another round. He said, "I can give you one right off the top of my frizzled head."

"Go."

"From outer space comes a spaceship and something goes wrong—if it can, it will, remember —and it whops into what is now, thanks to you, called Peacock. Why did you name it that, by the way?"

"That's a long story. I'll tell you another time."

"Okay. So, this ship whops into

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Peacock—there being no Peacock there before, this crater being caused, built, created by the crash of a derailed spaceship into that place. So the artifact is the ship that fell there, making the crater within which we have found an artifactual magnetic anomaly."

"You all right?" asked Groves. "You talk funny."

"I'm as all right as you."

Groves found nothing to say to that. "Right on, old buddy. But the anomaly isn't big enough, not by orders of magnitude, to be a ship. So give me some more."

"Glad to oblige. So it could be a *Sentinel* like. You know? Some communication left behind by folks so superior to us we have to bend down to crawl under a worm, right?"

"What?"

"Superior beings, man." Scanlan whirled his glass around, looked at it as if wondering what it was trying to tell him. "Trouble with you is, you got no soul."

GROVES took offense to this and ordered another round, though the glasses before them were not empty. "I've all the soul you have, and maybe a little bit more, though my skin be white. I've *been* there, right? Right. Tell me this, then, keeper of sacred secrets: assuming this is an intelligence-indicating artifact planted three feet beneath that dark lunar soil—and for the moment I'm willing to assume that—who put it there? What does it do? What is it going to say? To whom? Could be it's a signaling device for the home folks. Their home folks."

"Something is telling me it's time to go home," Scanlan said, but he didn't seem about to go. The bar was dark. The walls were of phony soot-stained wood and it was a comfortable place.

"It's not time to go home yet," Groves said. "Though home does have advantages at times. Assume again, then, that it's an intelligently planted artifact. What is its purpose? Why is it there?"

They were both tired. Both were drinking a lot—the two of them sitting in an Earthbound, darkened bar near the Space Center and wishing they could go up next time. And knowing that was out for both of them, one having made it once, the other thinking now he never would.

"Tell me this first, brother. Why is it underground?"

"I have the answer to that one. It was emplaced a long time ago on the surface, dead-center in Peacock, but the general course of events has since buried it. Micrometeorites, dust—like that."

"That would make it out of sight

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back there, man. Back in time, I mean."

"That's right, it would. Look. I'm serious about this. We're as certain as can be that the anomaly isn't a spaceship that crashed into Peacock. No way. So back to my question, which you evade. If it is an artifact—which is, after all, only a possibility—who put it there and why?"

"Okay, friend," Scanlan said. His dark gaze, thrust over the top of his tumbler and into the eyeballs of Groves, reminded its recipient of a saw-whet owl he'd raised a long time back. "Okay. So ask it from this end. *We* are a superior culture and we're out there exploring the galaxy, spreading the gospel. Or maybe we're involved in rapine and plunder, who knows? We find a planetary system with, say, Cro-Magnons living in caves. Or with Elizabethans, the equivalent thereof, doing their thing in the equivalent of London. Oh, to be in England, now that—"

"All right," said Groves. "We're a superior folk and we find a system in a primitive stage of development. Do we have a message for them? Suppose we go to the stars tomorrow. We want to tell them something? The primitives we find?"

Scanlan ordered another round, mentioning to no one in particular that this round would be the last. He focused his owlish eyes upon the problem, as if to solve it by mere visual observation, it lying there on the table between them. "I think," he said, after some moments, "that we do. We're *superior* folk, right? So we give them something to help them make it."

"Okay. I hope that's the way it is. Why do we put it on the moon, then, instead of on the planet?"

"A question of timing," Scanlan said. "That says it all."

Silence for some moments. "Pegasus Four was me," Groves said.

"What?"

"I keep wondering what happened to Stuart Stong and Nora Ivanovna when Harry Littlewood flew Pigeon back to Glaucous and left them there. Pegasus Two."

"They died, man. Bad scene. Not yours to worry about."

"We were pretty close to them on Peacock. We could have gone over and had a look."

"Wouldn't have bought you nothing—and they wouldn't let you do it."

Their concern with and about MA-2, and Grove's thought of the first two astronauts to be stranded on the moon, had taken them some distance from Earth and they wanted to stay out there a while. But guilt feelings are to be dealt

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with and they handled their present ones by getting out of there and going home to their respective wives, both of whom were, by then, quite angry.

PEGASUS 6 consisted of a command module carrying four and a lem putting three of these onto the lunar surface. They touched down within a hundred feet of the selected site. One astro-scientist in the command module and three scientist-astros in the lem, which was called Poseidon. (The command module was Neptune. One of the romanticists was a deep-sea fisherman by avocation, and his nomenclature had prevailed.) Two of the scientists, Perkins Savage and Sato Sugiyama, were archeologists. Their astro training had been hurried and minimal. They had been chosen for their skill in unearthing and uncovering ancient artifacts. The third scientist was Corbi Acampora. He had been born in Napoli and he was a real quasi-astro—he could fly Poseidon up to Neptune, which could in no way be said for either Sugiyama or Savage.

The first archeological mission to the moon.

"Those tracks are as fresh as if they were made yesterday," Savage said.

Acampora looked into Savage's bowl with contempt. "You were expecting maybe they'd be washed out, rained away, perhaps demolished by meteorites?"

Pegasus 6 didn't have a proper buggy because they weren't going to cover much territory, but it had a considerable payload of things to dig with. Shovels, picks, probes, corers, things like that, and a magnetometer. These were in a cart that had been so constructed that two men pulled and one pushed. Pegasus 6 would have been in trouble if they had missed the target by much, but there hadn't been any worry about that.

"No," Savage said, pushing. "It's just that they are so fresh. They might have been made a minute ago." Crunching over that dark lunar soil. "*How quick and fresh art thou*—"

"May I politely ask what that is from?" Sugiyama asked.

"Twelfth Night. *If music be the food of love, play on.* You know?"

"I am archeologist. A very sensitive one, granted, but still only archaeologist."

"I may say the same for myself. Anyway: *O spirit of love! How quick and fresh art thou*—"

"Oh, really? This is a lunar mission? Or looney?" Acampora, pulling. "Do you know how many squawk boxes are tuned into that—"

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"I'm glad you reminded me," Savage said as they approached the site. "The nature of this mission, Pegasus Six, is archeological. And this is it. We're there, Houston. Or here, as you prefer."

"Roger. You're there, Savage, from the official Houston point of view."

"Roger. Site appears as described and photographed by Pegasus Four. Program commencing."

Acampora began scrounging around with the inevitable rock bag. His functions were geologic and photographic. He was not a real geologist, just a rock collector. Savage and Sugiyama made a brief check with the magnetometer, an instrument neither had heard of until recently, and began a delicate probing of that dark soil. They found MA-2, by probe, within minutes. It was no more than thirty inches beneath the lunar surface.

"We have contact, Houston," Savage said. "We'll begin to shovel." Savage and Sugiyama marked off a two-by-six-foot area and began to excavate.

"Real weird," Sugiyama said. "Lightest dirt I've ever dug. And the most uncomfortable suit to do it in."

Twenty-eight inches down Savage said, "There she is."

Acampora came over to look and to photograph. Savage and Sugiyama now scooped with great care, removing lunar soil from whatever it was. Silence.

"Well?" Houston, unable to wait.

"Just a minute," Savage said. Scooping more soil off and brushing clear an area of about a square foot.

"You appreciate the fact that we're waiting," Houston said, a touch of acid coming over the microwaves.

"Yes. You probably won't like this. This is no artifact. Sorry about that."

"What—"

"Where are the geologists, now that we need them? It's, well, a rock. Looks like a meteor. I mean meteorite. I haven't seen one in a long time."

"We'd like you to describe what you can now see of it." The voice from Houston trailed behind it a wake of palpable disappointment.

"We know you're sorry," Sugiyama said. "We wanted an artifact too. More than you did, no doubt. It looks like a piece of dusty gray iron more than anything else. Moon dirt on it. We can't see much of it. Give us a little time and we'll tell you more."

"The surface, what is the surface like?"

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"What?"

"Pitted or smooth? Rough or regular? What is the surface like?"

"Small pits," Savage said. "If it is a meteorite it didn't fall through much atmosphere. We'll extend the trench."

Acampora seemed bored but he photographed, with competence, the continuing excavation. The men scooped away the moon dirt and brushed off the moon dust and found that the object of this very expensive mission was not—to archeologists—of much interest.

Back to Poseidon then, to dine upon those NASA goodies, to sleep and perhaps to dream. And Savage dreamed.

SAVAGE dreamed of a Russian woman and an American man, marooned on the moon by a madman. His dream has not been recorded anywhere, but this is what happened because of it:

Suiting up in Poseidon, mikes off.

"Sugi."

"Yes?"

"Our mission is an archeological bust, right?"

"Right."

"But there's lots else to do. We set up the programs canceled from Pegasus Four, handily sent along with us in case the archeology didn't work out. We've plenty to do to keep us busy after we've spent a few more hours on the damn meteorite, if that's what it is. But you and Acampora can take care of the rock for a while."

"What you have in mind, old buddy?" asked Acampora.

"I'm going over the ridge of Peacock and have a look at the Russian lem."

"I see why you want the mikes off," Sugiyama said. "Houston won't buy that—and you know it."

"No way they can stop me, is there? I'm going to go."

And he went. There was a monstrous barrage of flak, of course, but Savage was persuasive and eventually got Houston's half-hearted approval. He would have gone anyway.

"THIS is rough terrain. I'm about a hundred yards from the top of the crater."

"Slow down," said Houston. "Pulse and respiration are both way up there."

"Roger," Savage said, but he continued to struggle to the crater's edge. Turning around, he saw Sugiyama and Acampora, small figures, digging around the rock. He reached the top and was stunned by the suddenly open view. "I do be dog," he said. "You all should be up here. This is some

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kind of view. I'll send you a picture postcard."

He carried a camera, of course. He took some photographs.

"I see the lem. About a hundred yards slightly to my right, down a gentle slope from here. I'll go on over."

"Roger," said Houston. "Life support looks good. Take your time."

"Yeah, sure," Savage said, beginning to walk toward the fallen spacecraft. "I have a weird feeling," he said some time later. "Like I'm about to open Tut-ankh-amen's tomb."

Finally, approaching the ship: "The hatch is open. Nobody home. Lots of tracks." He took many pictures. He found the male Russian astronaut. "This man looks like he died yesterday," he said. "Vacuum-packed, so to speak," he said, adopting this tone in defense of the unexpected and disconcerting sense of awe that he felt. And where the hell, he wondered, did the other two go? So he followed the tracks and found them.

"I will be damned," he finally said. Everyone started talking at once, and Savage shut off the incoming audio. He stood there looking, thinking, and eventually taking some pictures. They were lying there, close together, fishbowls off. Savage, aided by his dream, put it all together. They had stayed in the lem until there'd been nothing left to breathe. Then they had suited up and come out here to sit on this small rise and look up at Earth. And a few minutes before there was nothing left to breathe in one of their suits (which one first? Savage wondered) they had both taken off the bowls and put their heads together for the last time. And they had died, right then. The way they'd fallen, fallen together, had an unplanned and uncontrollable beauty and Savage was reminded of ancient sculpture. He stood there some more, then turned on the incoming audio.

"Houston?"

"Roger, Perk, and just where the hell have you been?"

"To the true school of modesty," he said and he told them about it.

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GROVES and Scanlan were in Mission Control. Command module Neptune was halfway between here and there. Groves had an urgency to get on the horn and finally made it.

"Savage?"

"Roger. Groves?"

"Yes. I want to ask you something."

"Right on."

"What did you mean when you said that about the true school of modesty?"

"Well, I'm glad somebody asked me that. You named our little crater up there, did you not? Peacock, yes. When I first heard you something came back to me from English Lit and I looked up the works of one Thomas Love Peacock. Great man. You know the quotation, of course, old buddy?"

"I named the crater, didn't I?"

"No offense, thin-skin. Anyway —and you will appreciate this— that's what it was like, that's how they looked. You'll see the pictures later. For the benefit of the uninitiate, what Mr. Peacock said was something like this: Ancient sculpture is the true school of modesty. Where they—he was referring here to the Greeks— where they had modesty, we have cant. There's more and you can look it up, but it ends with: Where they had anything that exalts, delights, or adorns humanity, we have cant, cant, cant. It came to mind, sort of, up there."

"Roger. I dig. Thanks, Perk."

Scanlan interposed: "Take good care of those pictures on the way down, you hear, white boy?"

"Will do, Ian. Wish you could have been here, too."

"Not room for all of us this trip." He relinquished the microphone. "Let's get out of here," he said to Groves.

And they did.

THE bar was dimly lit and the walls were of phony soot-stained wood. They had been talking quite a while. Scanlan's dark gaze peered across the polished wood into David Groves.

"So. We didn't find a sentinel, we found no artifact. But we got a message anyway. Right?"

"Right. I wish I'd been up there."

"So what else is new? You can see the pictures. Okay? We get the message. Savage sure as hell got it loud and clear. So who else will? Who, and in what places? How many, and where? Enough to make any difference?"

"We'll see," Groves said, thinking it was about time to go home.

"We'll see." ★

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He traveled back to his youth
and discovered—an enemy!

THE YEARS

ROBERT F. YOUNG

THE old man paused when he came to the campus. The season was fall. A raw wind was blowing out of the west. It rattled the dead leaves that hung in tatters from the branches of academic elms and maples. It wrinkled the dead grass and blew through the naked shrubbery. Soon snow would come and the year would die and the new year would bow in.

The old man was trembling, but not because he was cold. The university buildings in the background

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frightened him. He was terrified of the students strolling along the walk—the long-haired, sloppily attired young men, the long-haired girls in overalls and denims. But he forced himself to go on and he made his old eyes focus upon the faces of the girls. It had cost him his life's savings to make the trip and he was determined not to go back empty-handed.

None of the students seemed to notice him. It was as though he did not exist (in a way he didn't, he supposed). Repeatedly he had to step off the walk to avoid colliding with them. But he was used to such indifference. The young of each generation were invariably arrogant and self-centered. It was only natural that they should be. The world was their apple and they knew it.

The old man began to lose some of his fear. The university buildings were far less formidable in appearance than memory had painted them. Memory was a poor painter at best. It overdrew, exaggerated. It added details that had never existed, left out others that had. And there was yet another consideration. You could never see something the second time in quite the same way you saw it the first, because the part of you that interpreted the initial impression was forever dead.

The old man peered eagerly at the faces of the strolling girls, searching for Elizabeth's. It was her face alone that he wanted to see. He wanted to take its youthful radiance back with him so that the final years of his life might be less bleak—so that some of the loneliness that had descended upon him after the death of his wife might be driven away. Just for a little while. A little while would be enough.

When he finally found her face he was touched to his marrow. So young, he thought. So sweetly beautiful. It surprised him that he could recognize it so readily. Perhaps memory was not as poor a painter as he had thought. His heart pounded and his throat grew tight. The classic reactions, only in his case multiplied by one thousand. His vision dimmed. He found it hard to see. Elizabeth . . .

She was walking beside a tall young man, talking to him and swinging her books. But the old man did not look at her companion. The moment was too precious to waste. Besides, he was afraid to look. The years . . .

The couple grew closer, laughing and talking, warm and secure in the oasis of their youth. Elizabeth wore no hat, no kerchief. Her red-gold hair danced in the wind, broke in evanescent waves along the soft shores of her childlike cheeks.

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Her lips were an autumn leaf lying lightly upon the lovely landscape of her face. Her eyes were shards of summer sky. She wore a shapeless gray sweater and paint-daubed dungarees. Her long and lissome legs were hidden from the sun. But memory served him well.

He was crying now. Unabashedly, the way a drunk cries. Elizabeth. Elizabeth, my darling, my dear . . .

She did not even notice him till she and her companion were almost abreast of him. Then she seemed to feel his gaze and looked into his eyes. She stopped and her face went white. Her companion halted beside her. The old man halted, too.

Color came into Elizabeth's cheeks. Revulsion darkened the azure of her eyes. Her full lips thinned. "How dare you stare at me like that, you dirty old man!"

Her companion was indignant. Angrily he confronted the old man. "I ought to punch you in the nose!"

The old man was horrified. Why, they hate me, he thought. They look upon me as a leper. I didn't expect them to recognize me—I didn't want them to. But this—dear God, no!

He tried to speak, but there was nothing he could say. He stood there dumbly, staring at the young man's strange and familiar face.

"Dirty old man," Elizabeth said again. She took her companion's arm and the two of them walked away. Helplessly the old man stared after them, knowing that although he would go on living, from that moment on he would be dead.

Why didn't I remember? he wondered. *How could I have forgotten that poor old man*?

He returned on dead legs to the bosquet on the outskirts of the university town where the time-field burned, stepped into its shimmering embrace and sped back through the years that had transmuted him from a tall young man into something unclean. After paying the guard the second half of the agreed-upon bribe and leaving the time station by the rear entrance, he drove out to the cemetery where Elizabeth lay buried. He stood by the grave, in the bitter wind, for a long time. Again and again he read the inscription on the granite marker: B. ^{1952}—D. ^{2025}. IN MEMORY OF MY BELOVED WIFE . . .

But Time the Thief had not yet finished. It trephined his skull and cut keep into his memories and extracted the soft summer nights and the sleeping flowers and the misty afternoons. It left only naked fields and tree-denuded hills.

He read the inscription a final time.

"Dirty old woman," he said. ★

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GALAXY BOOKSHELF

Theodore Sturgeon

BOOKS REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE

MIDSUMMER CENTURY
James Blish
Doubleday $4.95

KAI LUNG'S GOLDEN HOURS
Ernest Brahmah
Int. by Lin Carter
Ballantine $1.25

THE MIND BEHIND THE EYE
Joseph Green
DAW 95¢

THE PROBABILITY MAN
Brian N. Ball
DAW 95¢

THE BOOK OF VAN VOGT
A. E. Van Vogt
DAW 95¢

1972 ANNUAL WORLD'S BEST SF
Ed. Donald A. Wollheim
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YOUNG DEMONS
Ed Roger Elwood and Vic Ghidalia
Avon 75¢

REPORT ON PLANET THREE
Arthur C. Clarke
Harper & Row $6.95

THE WIND FROM THE SUN
Arthur C. Clarke
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich $5.95

MUTANT 59—THE PLASTIC EATERS
Kit Pedlar and Gerry Davis
Viking Press $5.95

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JAMES BLISH, prolific and sometimes extraordinary author (*A Case of Conscience,* the "Cities in Flight" novels), editor (*Nebula Award Stories 5, Kalki*—which is the journal of the James Branch Cabell Society) and, writing as "William Atheling, Jr.," critic-in-depth, has given us *Midsummer Century,* a novel about ESP. That is about as descriptive a phrase as saying that the *Forsyte Saga* is a story about some people. When Blish begins to ponder something he does it with care and rigor and a great gift for hypothesis. He is an argumentative man and when he finds himself unable to go along with some line of thinking—J. B. Rhine's, perhaps or Soal's—he tries to demolish it. His hypothesis in this case is interesting indeed: that the evolutionary development of ESP and that of intelligence are mutually exclusive, mostly because intelligence does most of its chores better. To Blish, however, this does not mean that in the future ESP will necessarily evolve out or that intelligence will necessarily prevail—or even that ESP will disappear entirely from intelligent species. His deep and very wise insight into nature illuminates the fact that nature does not, need not, and probably will not proceed in a linear fashion to satisfy anyone's preconceptions. In *Midsummer Century,* the Birds (and believe me, they are a flock very different from Hitchcock's *Birds*) have developed a form—or degree—of extrasensory, nonintelligent proclivity which seriously threatens humanity. But that is only one thread, one level of this unusual book. There are also a seriously considered thesis on the nature of death and an afterlife, and one on possession or the coexistence of one or more entities within another. Yes, and something to do with flying, too, which is the basis for one of the more exciting passages. During it the imprisoned protagonist kills one of his guards —a bird—and uses the corpse to glide himself out of the prison tower. Blish exhibits his usual flaw: he seems unable to put himself in the presence of dialogue and personally *hear* it—if he did he wouldn't write it as he does and his dialogue would be as good as his narrative, which is very. In any case, he most assuredly has an engrossing book here. Recommended.

BALLANTINE'S Adult Fantasy line (with the unicorn's head emblem) continues to disinter and present little-known or all-but-forgotten delights. It has a heavy little casket of jewels in *Kai Lung's*

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Golden Hours by Ernest Brahmah, respectfully edited by Lin Carter. Kai Lung is a sort of Scheherezade/Schweik/Aesop/Munchausen from mythical-mystical China, who clumsies himself into one appalling predicament after another and gets out of each by telling stories—more often than not to someone who knows he has not made his point but who lets him go anyway because the story was such fun. Once you tune in to Brahmah's Ching Lee type of periphrasis ("This humble and overrated person inexcusably suggests. . .") and begin to waltz with it—for if you can't it will get in your way—you'll be enchanted.

DAW BOOKS is Donald A. Wollheim, editor become publisher, and he is presenting an interesting line. His guarantee (aside from his claim to like what science-fiction readers like—and he ought to; he started in the field, rumor has it, some time between Cyrano de Bergerac and Hugo Gernsback) is that he will not publish anything that has been in paperback before. This he does by reprinting hardcovers from a while back, by buying originals and by making up collections in a new blend. More power to him. Examples in each category are these:

My favorite for this month and probably for a good while to come: ***The Mind Behind the Eye,*** by Joseph Green, which was published in hardcover in England. Here is story-telling with a vengeance. I'm not claiming that Joseph Green is a National Book Award league writer, but he tells a rich and eventful tale with two strong pluses: one, he really makes you give a damn about his characters and, two, his is the newly liberated, no-taboo approach so sorely needed before the prudery was zapped. Here is really the best of both worlds. Too many writers seem to have the idea that demonstrating their liberation is all they have to do and do it *instead* of telling a whacking good yarn. Green brings in sex without a giggle or blush or brashness, and as an absolutely essential component to his narrative. And what a narrative—not since Robert Young has there been a writer who envisages the gigantic as awesomely and specifically as Green. I'll give you this much: an alien invader is captured, not quite dead; his brain is irreparably damaged. He is *three hundred feet tall.* A space behind his eyeball is cleared away and fitted with two sets of computers, one for the autonomic system and one for the temporal chores, and two scientists, one a woman, get in there

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and make the giant live again—go to Mars—send out distress calls—be rescued by the interstellar aliens. I enjoyed this to the point of public gratitude to Mr. Green and DAW.

An example of the originals DAW is publishing is Brian N. Ball's *The Probability Man.* If you like convoluted plotting, worlds within worlds, time, space and history all recast into a concept of (to misquote the Bard) all the worlds are stages, then this is for you. For me, it's interesting that a 300-foot giant overwhelms me with size and a time-space-and-planets thing just hits me as a passable *passe-temps.* But I'm speaking my crotchets and perhaps they're not yours.

Finally, DAW is doing things like *The Book of Van Vogt,* a nice retrospective, and the *1972 Annual World's Best SF,* an activity Wollheim has been into for long enough to know well what he's doing. I have always liked his selections, though such a sweepingly inclusive title raises an eyebrow. It's not really as arrogant as it seems—and nobody would demand an exactitude like *"The Best 1972 Science Fiction I Could Get."* He got some pretty good ones.

I'm not going to review the reprint of Ursula K. Le Guin's *Rocannon's World,* beyond reporting that it's available and stating that this is one author you can buy on sight.

ROGER Elwood and Vic Ghidalia have come up with a real treasure: *Young Demons,* the best anthology of stories about marvelous, terrifying, amazing and unforgettable children since William Tenn's landmark *Children of Wonder.* There are eight stories, every single one worth the price of the whole book. I especially like—love, and have always loved—Kris Neville's

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Bettyann in its original novelette form. The novel is excellent, too, but this one grabbed me when it first came out in 1951 and the advent of the novel made me a little sad: would I ever see the original again? Well, I did—and so can you.

BUSY, busy Arthur Clarke. Completists are always down at the lumberyard with their hammers and saws, building extensions for the Clarke shelf. Quantity does not impair the special qualities of this giant in our field. *Report on Planet Three and Other Speculations* is a collection of articles, speeches, hypotheses and, well, speculations reprinted from a wide variety of publications. He expounds on science, technology, religion and Asimov, always with clarity and a good deal of dry humor. *The Wind from the Sun* is a new collection of fiction, his sixth, and contains all the stories he wrote in the 'sixties, which he terms "one of the most dramatic periods in the history of science and technology." It was indeed, and Clarke's nineteen stories reflect it well. Well-written and well-priced, this is a book worth having.

KIT Pedlar and Gerry Davis are, yet again, authors who do far better with ideas than with people. *Mutant 59: The Plastic Eaters* is one of the most fascinating compendia of real and extrapolated science and technology that I have ever read. Microbiology, metallurgy, aero- and hydro-dynamics—and then first-order verisimilitude in the operation and internal function of aircraft and contemporary spacecraft—all marvelous. The tight descriptions of the mysterious breakups of machines are almost unbearably realistic and suspenseful. It's only when it gets into interpersonal relationships that one comes back out of the book—the one time one should go in deeper. I get angry about this—see above, the remarks about Blish—not because of the defects of an author but because of his merits. I get angry when I see someone pounding in tacks with a violin, even when it isn't my violin. I get many, many more books than I review, and flawed technique coupled with flawed ideation makes for titles I just don't bother you with. When the extraordinary and/or unique comes along, as it does in this book, with bathetic people in it—I, well, am bothered. Still, by all means read this—it has so much. But if that "much" doesn't make you regret that there is not more. ★

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THE SOUL MUSIC OF DUCKWORTH'S *DIBS*

LARRY EISENBERG

If you would make this a better world—just listen to yourself!

DUCKWORTH was bored. I could see it all in the lack-luster glimmer of his black, beady eyes. He yawned and stretched constantly and I found myself yawning in empathy, though I was bursting with vigor and vitality.

"For God's sake," I snapped one day. "What's wrong with you?"

He sighed.

"I'm in one of those doldrums that periodically afflict all scientific minds. At the moment I'm without a single new idea to pursue and the old ones are a total drag. Don't worry. I'll snap out of it."

But he didn't. He seemed to mope about most of the time. I was concerned enough to schedule

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a lunch date at the faculty dining room with Dr. Nahr, eminent psychologist who had sent his rats through many maze patterns. I slipped the problem of Duckworth's boredom into the conversation slyly and Dr. Nahr bit.

"I know what he's going through," he said. "I've been there myself. My solution always is to construct a new sort of maze, one that the rats can't possibly solve."

"Don't you like rats?"

"I hate 'em," said Dr. Nahr. "I've always hated them since I was a boy. My guiding ambition is to drive the rats into a nervous breakdown through frustration."

"I don't think that would help Duckworth," I said doubtfully.

"Alternatively," said Dr. Nahr, "he might try to sweep his mind clean for a bit. He feels barren at the moment and struggles to come up with ideas. Consequently he ties himself into mental knots."

"Then you would suggest?"

"Total disengagement from academic activity. Let him loaf, fish, even chase women if his fancy takes him."

"It might," I said. "I'll subtly try to suggest this carefree sabbatical."

I tried to locate Duckworth that afternoon but without any luck. That evening I gulped my dinner and sat impatiently through a television spectacular on the evolution of a multiple ingredient sudsless soap until, in an unwary moment, my teenage daughter momentarily hung up the telephone. I snatched it and dialed vigorously. I hit the jackpot. The great Nobel laureate was at home.

A bone-cracking yawn preceded his: "Hello."

"Duckworth," I cried. "Where were you all afternoon?"

"Sleeping."

I clucked my tongue.

"I think I have the cure for your problem."

He seemed unimpressed as I outlined Dr. Nahr's strategy. But at last he reluctantly agreed to try the approach, possibly just to get rid of me.

HE APPEARED to have taken my suggestion. The following morning and afternoon, when I peeked into his lab, he was not around. His secretary assured me he was not sleeping at home. In a week's time I had begun to wonder where he was. A week after that I had almost forgotten about him when I was called to the phone. I was both guilty and pleased at the sound of Duckworth's voice, annoyed and acerbic as ever when his brain was functioning.

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"You're back at work?" I cried.

"Damn right," he snapped. "Can you get over to my lab right away?"

I was delighted to go. It was clear that the cobwebs had been swept away and that the superb creative machine, the Duckworth brain, was ready to start cracking again. He was pacing up and down when I arrived, muttering to himself in little expletives.

"Something is wrong?" I asked anxiously.

"Worse than that," he said bitterly. "I tried to immerse myself in wine, women and song. The wine was all right, but the women? We've lost all sense of true bawdiness and vulgarity.

"You were turned down?"

"On the contrary, I didn't even have to ask. And have you seen a film lately?"

"Not many," I admitted. "Frankly, I'm a bit embarrassed by the spate of explicit sexual acts that cram the screen. Besides, I've never looked on sex as a spectator sport."

Duckworth seized my hand and shook it warmly.

"There are times," he said, "when I remember why it is I'm so fond of you. But you left out the most salient feature. The films are all deadly dull."

"True."

"And," resumed Duckworth, "although I had hoped to relax through a series of quietly banal films, these bits of rutomania overwhelmed the eyes and ears with grotesque caricatures of the female and male form. Frankly, I've had my fill of pimpled rumps."

I shuddered at the image.

"But there is still *song*," I said.

"Which brings me to my newest idea," said Duckworth.

I beamed at him.

"Don't look so damned happy," said Duckworth. "It's a minor effort but it's in the public interest. I've listened to enough rock epics to know when I've been had by incompetents and musical cretins. I wondered where the Mozarts and Beethovens had gone. And then the answer came to me."

"They're dead?"

"I'm trying to be serious," said Duckworth. "I've invented a new musical form. It will require your considerable programing talents and the aid of your computer."

I was disappointed and I suppose my chagrin showed in my face.

"There's nothing original in that approach," I said. "Computer programs have been written to compose music and there are electronic devices like the Moog

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that can simulate many instruments."

"I'm quite aware of all that," said Duckworth. "My DIBS offers an approach that goes back to the human being in the most fundamental sense."

"DIBS?"

"Duckworth's Instrument Body Synthesizer."

"Are you synthesizing bodies?"

Duckworth groaned.

"So my acronym isn't perfect. Listen to my idea. I propose to assign various tonal scales to certain body parameters. For example, the electrocardiogram is an elecrical waveform which reproduces the field changes due to the contraction cycle of the heart. Suppose I assign a different note to each level of this waveform?"

"And assign another range of notes to the brain-wave pattern?" I suggested.

Duckworth almost went into a highland fling.

"You've got the idea," he exulted. "Cellos for the blood pressure, oboes for skin resistance. By monitoring these different body parameters and sending our signals to the DIBS, we can produce the sounds of different instruments, each one corresponding to different changes in one's body."

"It sounds exciting to me," I said. "Each individual will produce his own music, unique to himself and to the mood he's in. I like the idea."

"Good," said Duckworth. "I need your time, lots of it."

I didn't have the time to spare but I couldn't let my old friend down.

"I'll fit you in somehow," I promised.

I STOLE fleeting moments here and there. Even at the movies, I thought of how certain subroutines ought to go. I skipped lunches for weeks until candy bars began to rot my teeth. And at last my computer program was written and debugged.

Duckworth had been patience itself. He met me in the computer lab, pushing ahead of him a cabinet on wheels.

"We'll place the monitoring electrodes on your body, connect them to my box and thence to the computer," he said.

"My body?" I cried. "Not me."

"Don't be afraid of exposing your soul," said Duckworth. "I'll have the output sound connected to your earphones and you alone shall hear the music."

I drew a deep breath as Duckworth deftly applied the electrodes

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and then switched on his box. My music began.

It was an exhilarating experience and a painful one—all at the same time. It revealed everything I knew about myself and things I didn't care to admit. It shook me to the very core and, after Duckworth had turned off the power, I was determined to be a better man.

"I have some things I must tell my wife," I said.

"Later," said Duckworth.

He peered at me closely.

"You do look as though you had been through an ordeal. I guess it's my turn now."

"Don't," I warned.

"I have to."

I helped place the electrodes about his chest, scalp and arms and then turned on the power. Duckworth lifted the earphones to his head and his face turned a bloodless shade. I averted my eyes, recalling what I had gone through.

When it was over, Duckworth said nothing. Quietly we disassembled the cables and put away all of the loose gear. After we had left the computer room Duckworth turned to me.

"Would you dare to let anyone else hear your music?"

"Only my psychoanalyst," I said.

"I agree," said Duckworth. "I must write a letter of apology to Dr. Steersford."

Steersford had been Duckworth's rival for the Nobel Prize. I discreetly did not ask Duckworth why he was writing. He fished out his wallet and handed me a bill.

"The twenty I owed you," he said.

"I'd forgotten all about it."

"I know," said Duckworth. "I'm going off now. I want to rewrite some grant proposals that are filled with exaggerations."

I took hold of his arm.

"Duckworth," I said. "Don't you see what we have on our hands?"

The beady eyes became reflective and he stroked his wispy beard.

"I know what you mean. Listening to this music has made us see into our very souls. As a consequence, we've become honest men and are determined to undo all of our misdeeds."

"Exactly," I said. "With all due modesty, I don't think our misdeeds amount to ***that*** much. But what if we could get someone in the power structure to listen to his soul song?"

"It may not work on everybody," said Duckworth.

"Let's give it the acid test," I said. "Try it on President Hinkle."

Duckworth winced.

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"Our university president and grand old man of science? It's a grossly unfair test, but I agree."

GETTING President Hinkle to participate in our experiment was a lot easier than I had expected. He arrived at the computer lab the following morning and after applying the electrodes, I slipped the phones to his head. He was beaming genially all through the preliminaries and even humming a little tune whose lyrics were, as I recall, quite bawdy. Then Duckworth turned on the DIBS.

Hinkle's face lit up like a Christmas tree. He waved his arms about rhythmically and even hopped a little. I looked at Duckworth, perplexed, and his face reflected even greater amazement than mine did. Fifteen minutes later we turned off the computer.

"Oh pshaw," said President Hinkle. "Is it over so soon? Duckworth, you've outdone yourself. What a perfectly charming musical device!"

"Were you pleased with the music?" asked Duckworth.

"Pleased? My boy, that's the greatest understatement of them all. It was grand, noble, illuminating. It was an amazing journey into my soul and everything I saw pleased me."

"I see," I said.

After I removed the electrodes and helped Hinkle back into his shirt he spoke once again.

"One thing more," he said. "This experience has also helped me make up my mind about a couple of things that had been hanging fire. I'm going to accept the suggestion of the Trustees to start constructing a twenty-five-foot statue of me. I'm also going to let them double my salary."

"At a time when everyone else is being asked to accept a ten per cent cut?" I cried.

The question was indiscreet but I was unable to stop myself.

"Only a truly big man can accept honors without mock humility," said President Hinkle.

He leaned over, shook Duckworth's hand and then mine. He waved blithely before leaving the computer lab.

When he had gone, I shook my head sadly.

"That takes the cake, Duckworth," I said bitterly. "In his case, it reinforced every egomaniacal tendency he has ever had. And God knows he didn't need any reinforcement."

"You're right," said Duckworth. "The machine is a failure. It makes people who are basically decent more so."

"And the loathsome ones even

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more so," I added. "It certainly would be a way of separating the sheep from the goats."

"Do I need a complex technological mishmash to tell a louse when I see him?" cried Duckworth.

"No, but think what a help it would be in personnel offices. Those who would be upset could be steered into the lower echelon jobs. And the ones who enjoy listening to their soul music would qualify for the executive posts. The Pentagon would buy a thousand of these devices."

Duckworth was inspecting the fire hose that lay in neat coils around its spindle. Then he deftly slipped the fire axe out of its niche.

"Don't do it, Duckworth," I warned. "The Luddite approach will solve nothing."

"I designed it and I have the right to destroy it," he snarled.

"Not any more," I said. "Besides, we've overlooked the most important aspect of all. So far no one has listened to someone else's soul music. Think of the possibilities there."

Duckworth shuddered.

"I have."

"You can't have!" I cried. "Look at it this way. Suppose every prospective bride and groom had to listen to the music of the other. Or better still—what if every candidate for political office, or any other position of trust, had to play his soul music for the people?"

"We'd have no candidates," said Duckworth.

"Who's the cynic now? Maybe you're right. But suppose, just suppose, that people begin to strive to measure up to what they say they are. What a magnificent society would emerge!"

"It's a remote possibility," said Duckworth.

He hefted the axe in his palm and then carefully put it back on the wall.

"What the hell," he said, "what isn't a remote possibility? I'll give it a try. I'll even agree to write a series of popular articles on the potential of the DIBS, provided that you help me."

"Of course," I said. "But I consider myself unworthy of the opporutnity."

"You are," said Duckworth.

We set about putting our leads away and closing up the DIBS. Duckworth chuckled for the first time that day.

"What's funny?" I asked.

Duckworth shrugged.

"Who knows?" he said. "It just occurred to me that the DIBS may solve Mao's problems on self-criticism."

And as far as I know, it did. ★

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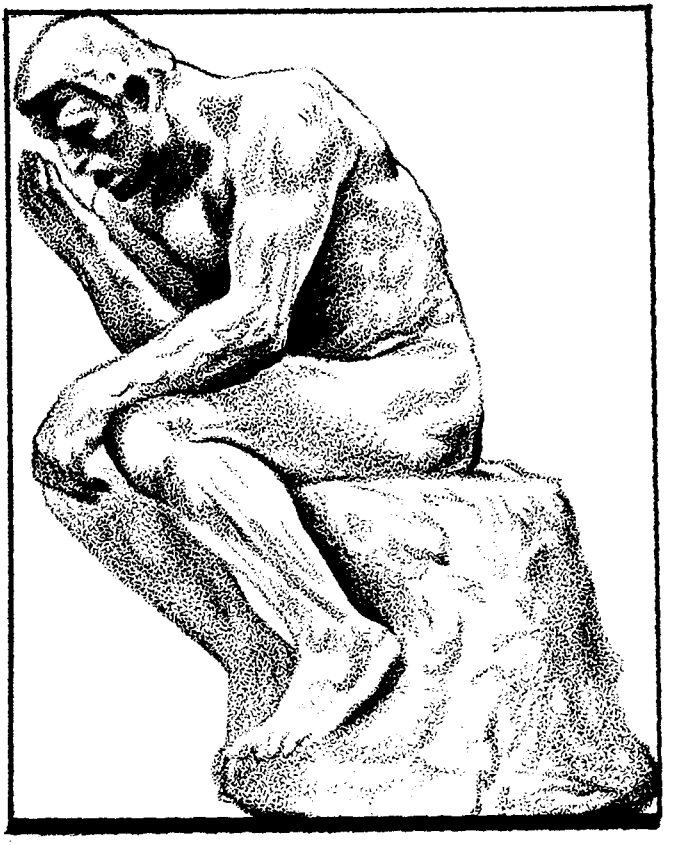
KRIS NEVILLE



MEDICAL PRACTICES AMONG THE IMMORTALS

Wouldn't it be nice to live forever and walk among the stars?

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FELIX WEAVER, M. D., hearing the door chimes, anticipated the repairman. He stood up quickly—the call was costing him money.

Opening the door, Dr. Weaver was pleased to note that the man was new. The last repairman had not done as well as he might have since the cooker was down again—and the new man (hopefully with a family) might be in need of medical services. With the prospects of immortality assured no man wanted to risk being carried off prematurely because of some correctable defect, no matter how remote the possibility was.

"It's the cooker again," said Dr. Weaver.

"How do I get to it?"

"Come along," said Dr. Weaver.

Dr. Weaver lived in one of the older houses, which had required extensive remodeling. What had formerly been the kitchen was now his medical laboratory. Beyond this was his office, a remodeled den, containing two chairs and his mahogany desk. The food-preparation unit was entered from the dining room via a concrete stairway.

Dr. Weaver lighted the stairway for the repairman and the two of them descended. At the bottom the repairman examined the meal preparer briefly, then went to his bag, which he had put down at the foot of the stairs. He opened it and began unpacking. Soon his instruments lay around him—meters, probes, an oscilloscope and a small computer.

"Let's plug this thing in and see," he said.

Dr. Weaver drew out his business card and fingered it nervously. One always sought clients—the story of a physician's life. One spoke of strange diseases that might be encountered as a result of the night air and for which all-purpose injections were administered. Occasionally one could avail oneself of an epidemic scare and business would be good for a week or two. Failing epidemics, all were advised to have their systems depoisoned at least every six months to be on the safe side, since you could never know for sure what lethal agents accidentally got into the air and the food. There was also a fair business in prescription analgesics and oxygen preparations for hangovers and in certain other miscellaneous services. On rare occasions one found a case where surgery of some sort was indicated and managed to snag a finder's fee. Altogether not the best—but a living.

Dr. Weaver stood on first one foot and then the other.

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"Bread prices went up again today," the repairman said. "It's getting so a working man can't make ends meet."

"That's certainly true," Dr. Weaver said. He felt the growth of maniacal rage. Murder, although severely dealt with, was not unknown. Dr. Weaver was a firm supporter of the President.

"You'll be glad to know that I'll have this thing fixed in a jiffy. Computer picked up the trouble."

"You'll have time for a cup of coffee, then?" Dr. Weaver said, knowing he was going to pay for a full hour in any event.

"That'd be good," said the repairman.

"We'll have it when you finish here," said Dr. Weaver, shifting his weight and peering over the man's shoulder.

The repairman, somewhat displeased with the continuing supervision, stopped and sat down. "Let me tell you what I'm doing," he said. "You see, this cooker unit is attached to your frozen storage compartment—where the food is kept—and there's a little trigger that is supposed to start it up when the food comes sliding down that chute over there. Now, this little trigger has caused us a lot of trouble in the—"

"Just call me when you finish."

"—a lot of trouble, I was saying, in development, because the operation is quite complex. You have to consider that the cooker has to maintain different levels of heat in various areas if you want the food all to come out at the same time."

"I understand that," said Dr. Weaver, "and I really have to go now." He fled the repairman. If angered sufficiently the man might follow him about the house, from room to room, explaining the operation of the equipment. Repairmen had been known to do so.

DR. WEAVER waited in his laboratory—in what used to be the kitchen when cooking was still done manually. The lab's contents had been given to him on his graduation from medical school—at the rates possible in his practice it would have taken him ten lifetimes to pay for it. He could, of course, do no major repairs on the equipment. That was for the engineers, who went to school a number of years longer than he did. The human body, when all was said and done, was basically less complex than many electronic devices. In the human organism only a half-dozen important chemical reactions plus a few mechanical things could still go wrong. Like a radio, it was

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comparatively simple, self-renewing and built to last forever.

The repairman came up shortly. "There," he said. "That ought to do it. I thought I might have to replace the trigger unit, but you were lucky this time. Tell your wife to watch for sensitive temperature differences—she works it too hard and it will be down again inside a year. You have to learn to treat these cooker units right if you want them to last."

"I'll tell her."

The repairman seated himself, apparently pleased with the speed with which the trouble had been located and repaired. "Here I am working twenty hours a week," he said, "and the rest of the world is coming along nicely without working this hard. Why do you suppose they spend our tax dollars trying to industrialize Asia?"

Dr. Weaver thought, suddenly despairing, that the future was shaped by the present. The majority, in the end, would go where they wanted to go. An industrialized Asia would need more repairmen than doctors. There was little Dr. Weaver could do. His anger returned. He drew coffee for the two of them, his hand shaking with the emotion. Thirty minutes were still left of the hundred-and-seventy-five-dollar hour. He knew that some day he was going to kill somebody.

The repairman said, "And think of how many years we've wasted fiddling with science—and the tax dollars down that rathole, too."

Dr. Weaver suggested, "In this day and age it's hard to see how anybody can figure out a new way to go insane."

"And it's difficult, if I may say so as an engineer, imagining the degree of sanity of a man who thinks he's fiddling around with the fundamental fabric of the space-time continuum and expects to have any success with it."

"I'm not too much up on theory," Dr. Weaver said. "But wouldn't you like to see us able to explore other star systems, not just our eight other little planets here? Some day we might be able to walk out there, once we get the equipment built—and we may need Asia to help us build the equipment. It seems to me that we ought to support the President completely in this."

"Can you tell me why we should do it, though? That's all I'm asking."

Images drifted through Dr. Weaver's mind of other planets circling other stars. "We'd reap a lot of technological benefits."

"We got all we need."

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THE blind rage filled Dr. Weaver again, but somehow he could never get it out in words and it lay penned. Why should he be so interested in getting to the stars? What more did a man really need than what he already had? Nearly everyone felt like the repairman and yet, to Dr. Weaver, that was wrong. They were all wrong somehow. It was necessary to get the planet into order and go out among the stars.

"If it weren't for these high taxes and having to work my butt off every week," the repairman continued, "I'd be perfectly happy. Let me tell you, I would be."

Dr. Weaver felt the rage retreat, followed by despair.

"Nice place you got here," said the repairman, putting four spoons of sugar in the coffee, stirring.

"Thank you, we like it. I'm just a physician, an M.D., and we survive. Do you have any children?"

"One. He's two now. We plan our other one when this one's out of college. I think it's better to space them out. I know a lot of people wind up not wanting to be bothered with the second one if they wait—but I think I'll take that route."

"We did," said Dr. Weaver. "Our first is seventeen and we're seriously thinking about a second now."

"Seventeen?" asked the repairman. "What do you think these teenagers are up to? Just don't understand them. What are they looking for? Running all over these agricultural countries and upsetting whole economies."

Dr. Weaver knew that an extended discussion along this line would only alienate beyond recall a potential client. Further more, it would continue to subject him to the alternate waves of fury and despair.

"May I give you my business card?" he asked. "In case you need the services of a physician. I think you're right on raising the child. A child really deserves undivided attention for the first fifteen years at least. It's a wise choice you've made. Maybe I could show you my little laboratory? It's very well finished."

"I can see that. That's a nice model of the cell monitor."

"Well, you don't need to have this stuff described to you, but it is well set up. With this equipment, I can locate any organic defect you can name. Now, obviously, most aren't important—though one should keep an eye on them—but you can never be sure without professional advice—"

The repairman prepared to listen with interest, even though—barring accident, poison or irrepar-

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able organic defects of a genetic nature—he could live as long as he wanted to. Basically longevity was merely a question of eliminating the death wish and keeping the glands in proper adjustment to prevent aging.

"The full examination costs only five hundred dollars," Dr. Weaver said. "And then I give you the shots you need without any other charge—I throw them in free. Now, of course, there's a routine check, which is virtually as good and which I can handle for seventeen-fifty, with a six-dollar, twenty-five-cent charge for each shot—the total seldom runs over ten. You'll find that very competitive. Many of my patients let me set up a continuing program, which includes periodic depoisoning and is recommended by the medical association. I think you ought seriously to consider a program of that sort."

The repairman promised to think about dropping by. He had gone to a physician about six months ago, but you could never tell. What one man missed another might catch—and he might arrange a visit for his wife and baby to see how they liked it. If they liked the deal he would come himself and try the service.

"Certainly love to have you," said Dr. Weaver.

In that moment Dr. Weaver suddenly wished he had gone into surgery to avoid the necessity for such arrangements as this. Still, a good surgeon was a person of great competence and there was no doubt that one had to have exceptional talent to start with—and worked hard to keep in practice for the few operations one did. Every film was reviewed and if a man turned in a really awkward performance he was pensioned off—and without the work a man had trained for he usually passed on between sixty-five and seventy, if not earlier.

So maybe it was better to be just an M.D. instead of a surgeon. Dr. Weaver was looking forward to a good long life. He thanked the repairman at the door, signed the slip and repeated how pleased he would be to meet the repairman's wife and child.

He went back to his office. It was a little early for his next appointment—a Mrs. Christianson. She wanted a chemical modifications to her body hair for some strange reason.

Dr. Weaver flipped on for the news printout.

The lead story was about a man who'd just turned a hundred and twenty. A real rarity. Dr. Weaver looked over the suicide list to see if there was anyone on it he had known. ★

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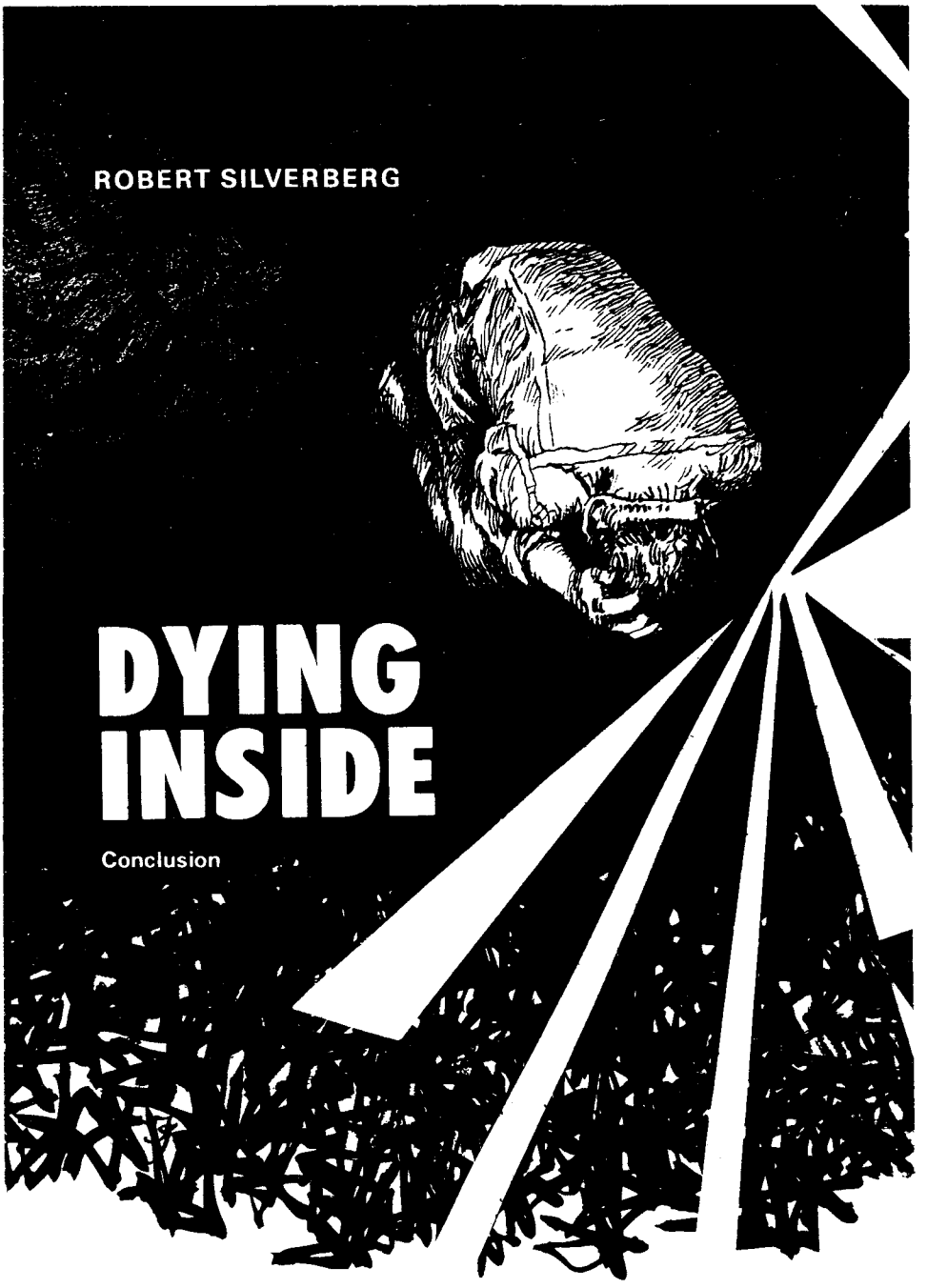

DYING INSIDE

Conclusion

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WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

DAVID SELIG is a genetic mutant, uniquely gifted with the ability to read minds other than his own, some of them not human. He is forced into a mode of existence a similarly talented friend, TOM NYQUIST, describes as the "super-human condition" DAVID'S gift early in life alienates him from his schoolmates, from his well-to-do, middle-class parents, PAUL and MARTHA SELIG, from his lovely but loose adopted sister, JUDITH—all of whose most intimate moments he has invaded. It also gives him money when he wants it and women when he wants them along with moments of ecstasy as when he reads the mind of a bee, a trout or a Catskill farmer like GEORG SCHIELE. For through the rich soil of his fields, SCHIELE communes with God, the universe and

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"the oneness of all things."

DAVID meets TONI, a beautiful and intensely intelligent career girl, at a time when his fortunes are at a low ebb. Their love affair promises him the first truly normal human relationship he has known. He has deliberately avoided reading her mind—until, during drug experience DAVID does not share, she draws him into her brain, where he sees himself as a blood-sucking bat creature, living parasitically on others.

The experience proves destructive. DAVID is reduced to eking out a living by writing term and doctoral papers and theses for a fee for students at his old Alma Mater, Columbia University. He is also desperately sensing a waning of his mental and mind-reading powers and becomes crucially involved with writing a classical thesis to save the scholastic career of Columbia's basketball star, YAHYA LUMUMBA. Reading LUMUMBA'S savagely black soul poses an unprecedented and dangerous challenge to any white DAVID SELIG.

XVI

THERE was always the danger of being found out. David Selig knew he had to be on his guard. This was an era of witch-hunters, when anyone who departed from community norms was ferreted out and burned at the stake. Spies were everywhere, probing for young Selig's secret. Even Miss Mueller, his biology teacher. She was a pudgy little poodle of a woman, about forty, glum face, dark arcs under her eyes. Miss Mueller was very deep into extrasensory and occult phenomena. Of course they didn't use phrases like "very deep into" in 1949, when David Selig was in her class, but let the anachronism stand—she was ahead of her time, a hippie born too soon. She really grooved behind the irrational, the unknown. She knew her way around the high school bio curriculum in her sleep, which was more or less the way she taught it, but what really turned her on were things like telepathy, clairvoyance, telekinesis, astrology, the whole parapsychological bag. It didn't take much to nudge her away from the day's assignment, the study of metabolism or the circulatory system or whatever, and onto one of her hobbyhorses. She was the first on her block to own the *I Ching*. She had done time inside orgone boxes. She believed that the Great Pyramid of Gizeh held divine revelations for mankind. She had sought deeper truths by way of Zen, General Semantics, the Bates eyesight exercises and the readings of Edgar Cayce.

Naturally she kept up with the research into extrasensory per-

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ception that J.B. Rhine was doing down at Duke University. She terrified David whenever she spoke of this. He constantly feared that she was going to give way to the temptation to run some Rhine experiments in class and would thereby flush him out of hiding. He had read Rhine himself, of course, hoping to find something that would explain him to himself, but there was nothing there except statistics and foggy conjecture. Okay, Rhine was no threat to him so long as he went on piddling around in North Carolina. But muddled Miss Mueller might just strip him naked and deliver him to the pyre.

Inevitable, the progression toward disaster. The topic for the week, suddenly, was the human brain, its functions and capabilities. See, this is the cerebrum, this is the cerebellum, this is the medulla oblongata. A child's garden of synapses. Fat-cheeked Norman Heimlich, gunning for a 99, knowing precisely which button to push, put up his hand.

"Miss Mueller, do you think it'll ever be possible for people really to read minds, I mean not by tricks or anything but actual mental telepathy?"

This was her cue to launch into an animated discussion of ESP, parapsychology, inexplicable phenomena, supernormal modes of communication and perception, the Rhine researches, et cetera, et cetera. David wanted to hide under his desk. The word "telepathy" made him wince. He already suspected that half the class realized what he was. Now came a flash of wild paranoia. Are they looking at me, are they staring and pointing and tapping their heads and nodding? He had surveyed every mind in the class again and again, desperately trying to amuse himself during the arid stretches of boredom, and he knew that his secret was safe. His classmates, plodding young Brooklynites all, would never cotton to the veiled presence of a superman in their midst. They thought he was strange, yes, but had no notion of *how* strange. Would Miss Mueller now blow his cover, though?

NO ESCAPE. She had her cards with her the next day. "These are known as Zener cards," she explained solemnly, holding them up, fanning them out like Wild Bill Hickok about to deal himself a straight flush. David had never actually seen a set of the cards before, yet they were as familiar to him as the deck his parents used in their interminable canasta games. "They were devised about twenty-five years ago at Duke University by Dr. Karl E. Zener and Dr. J.B. Rhine. Another name for them is 'ESP cards.' Who can tell me what 'ESP' means?"

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Norman Heimlich's stubby hand was waving in the air. "Extrasensory perception, Miss Mueller!"

"Very good, Norman." Absentmindedly she began to shuffle the cards. Her eyes, normally inexpressive, gleamed with a Las Vegas intensity. She said, "The deck consists of twenty-five cards, divided into five 'suits' or symbols. Five cards are marked with a star, five with a circle, five with a square, five with a pattern of wavy lines and five with a cross or plus sign. Otherwise they look just like ordinary playing cards." She handed the pack to Barbara Stein, another of her favorites, and told her to copy the five symbols on the blackboard. "The idea is for the subject being examined to look at each card in turn, face down, and try to name the symbol on the other side. The test can be run in many different ways. Sometimes the examiner looks briefly at each card first—this gives the subject a chance to pick the right answer out of the examiner's mind if he can. Sometimes neither the subject nor the examiner sees the card in advance. Sometimes the subject is allowed to touch the card before he makes his guess. Sometimes he may be blindfolded and at other times he may be permitted to stare at the back of each card. No matter how it's done, though, the basic aim is always the same—the subject is to determine, using extrasensory powers, the design on a card that he can't see. Estelle, suppose the subject has no extrasensory powers at all, but is simply operating on pure guesswork. How many right guesses could we expect him to make out of the twenty-five chances?"

Estelle, caught by surprise, reddened and blurted, "Uh—twelve and a half?"

A sour smirk from Miss Mueller, who turned to Estelle's brighter, happier twin. "Beverly?"

"Five, Miss Mueller?"

"Correct. You always have one chance out of five of guessing the right suit, so five right calls out of twenty-five is what luck alone ought to bring. Of course, the results are never that neat. On one run through the deck you might have four correct hits and the next time six—then five, then maybe seven and then perhaps only three—but the average over a long series of trials ought to be about five. That is, if pure chance is the only factor operating. Actually, in the Rhine experiments, some groups of subjects have averaged six and a half or seven hits out of twenty-five over many tests. Rhine believes that this above-average performance can only be explained as ESP. And certain subjects have done much better. There was a man once who called nine straight cards right for two days in a row. A few days later he hit fifteen straight cards, twenty-one out of twenty-five. The

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odds against that feat are fantastic. How many of you think it could have been nothing but luck?"

About a third of the hands in the class went up. One of the hands belonged to David Selig. He was merely trying to don protective coloration.

Miss Mueller said, "Let's run a few tests today. Victor, will you be our first guinea pig? Come to the front of the room."

Victor Schlitz shambled forward. He stood stiffly beside Miss Mueller's desk as she cut the cards and cut them again. After peering quickly at the top card she slid it toward him. "Which symbol?" she asked.

"Circle?"

"We'll see. Class, don't say anything." She handed the card to Barbara Stein, telling her to place a checkmark under the proper symbol on the blackboard. Barbara checked the square. Miss Mueller glanced at the next card. *Star,* David thought.

"Waves," Victor said. Barbara checked the star.

"Plus." *Square, dummy!* Square.

"Circle." *Circle.* Circle. A sudden ripple of excitement in the classroom at Victor's hit. Miss Mueller, glaring, called for silence.

"Star." *Waves.* Waves was what Barbara checked.

"Square." *Square,* David agreed. Square. Another ripple, more subdued.

VICTOR went through the deck. Miss Mueller had kept score: four corrrect hits. Not even as good as chance. She put him through a second round. Five. All right, Victor—you may be sexy, but a telepath you aren't. Miss Mueller's eyes roved the room. Another subject? Let it not be me, David prayed. God, let it not be me. It wasn't. She summoned Sheldon Feinberg. He hit five the first time, six the second, Respectable, unspectacular. Then Alice Cohen. Four and four. Stony soil, Miss Mueller. David, following each turn of the cards, had hit twenty-five out of twenty-five every time, but he was the only one who knew that.

"Next?" Miss Mueller said. David shrank into his seat. How much longer until the dismissal bell? "Norman Heimlich." Norman waddled toward the teacher's desk. She glanced at a card. David, scanning her, picked up the image of a star. Bouncing then to Norman's mind, David was amazed to detect a flicker of an image there, a star perversely rounding its points to form a circle, then reverting to being a star. What was this? Did the odious Heimlich have a shred of the power? "Circle," Norman murmured. But he hit the next one—the waves—and the one after that, the square. He did indeed seem to be picking up emanations, fuzzy and indistinct but emanations all the same,

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from Miss Mueller's mind. Fat Heimlich had the vestiges of the gift. But only the vestiges. David, scanning his mind and the teacher's, watched the images grow ever more cloudy and vanish altogether by the tenth card, fatigue scattering Norman's feeble strength. He scored a seven, though, the best so far. *The bell,* David prayed. *The bell, the bell, the bell!* Twenty minutes away.

A small mercy. Miss Mueller briskly distributed test paper. She would run the whole class at once. "I'll call numbers from one to twenty-five," she said. "Write down the symbol you think you see as I call each number. Ready? One."

David saw a circle. *Waves,* he wrote.

Star. *Square.*

Waves. *Circle.*

As the test neared its close, it occurred to him that he might be making a tactical error by muffing every call. He told himself to put down two or three right ones, just for camouflage. But it was too late for that. There were only four numbers left, it would look too conspicuous if he hit several of them correctly after missing all the others. He went on missing.

Miss Mueller said, "Now exchange papers with your neighbor and mark his answers. Ready? Number one: circle. Number two: star. Number three: waves. Number four . . ."

Tensely she called for results. Had anyone scored ten hits or more? No, teacher. Nine? Eight? Seven? Norman Heimlich had seven again. He preened himself—Heimlich the mind-reader. David felt disgust at the knowledge that Heimlich had even a crumb of power. Six? Four students had six. Five? Four? Miss Mueller diligently jotted down the results. Any other figures? Sidney Goldblatt began to snicker. "Miss Mueller, how about zero?"

She looked startled. "Zero? Was there someone who got all twenty-five cards wrong?"

"David Selig did!"

DAVID SELIG wanted to drop through the floor. All eyes were on him. Cruel laughter assailed him. *David Selig got them all wrong.* It was like saying, David Selig wet his pants, David Selig cheated on the exam, David Selig went into the girls' toilet. By trying to conceal himself he had made himself terribly conspicuous. Miss Mueller, looking stern and oracular, said, "A null score can be quite significant, too, class. It might mean extremely strong ESP abilities rather than the total absence of such powers, as you might think." Oh, God. Extremely strong ESP abilities. She went on, "Rhine writes of phenomena such as 'forward displacement' and 'backward displacement,' in which an unusually

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powerful ESP force might accidentally focus on one card ahead of the right one or one card behind it—or even two or three cards away. So the subject would appear to get a below-average result when actually he's hitting perfectly, just off the target! David, let me see your answers."

"I wasn't getting anything, Miss Mueller. I was just putting down my guesses and I suppose they were all wrong."

"Let me see."

As though marching to the scaffold, he brought her the sheet. She placed it beside her own list and tried to realign it, searching for some correlation, some displacement sequence. But the randomness of his deliberately wrong answers protected him. A forward displacement of one card gave him two hits. A backward displacement of one card gave him three. Nothing significant there. Nevertheless, Miss Mueller would not let go. "I'd like to test you again," she said. "We'll run several kinds of trials." She began to shuffle the deck. God, God, God, where are you? Ah. The bell! Saved by the bell! "Can you stay after class?" she asked. In agony he shook his head. "Got to go to geometry next, Miss Mueller." She relented. Tomorrow, then. We'll run the tests tomorrow. God! He was up all the night in a turmoil of fear, sweating, shivering—about four in the

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BEYOND APOLLO
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morning he vomited. He hoped his mother would make him stay home from school, but no luck. At half-past seven he was aboard the bus. Would Miss Mueller forget about the test? Miss Mueller had not forgotten. The fateful cards were on her desk. There would be no escape. He found himself the center of all attention. All right, Duv, be cleverer this time. "Are you ready to begin?" she asked, tipping up the first card. He saw a plus sign in her mind.

"Square," he said.

He saw a circle. "Waves," he said.

He saw another circle. "Plus."

He saw a star. "Circle," he said.

He saw a square. "Square," he said. *That's one.*

He kept careful count. Four wrong answers, then a right one. Three wrong answers, another right one. Spacing them with false randomness, he allowed himself five hits on the first test. On the second he had four. On the third, six. On the fourth, four. He wondered, am I being too average? Should I give her a one-hit run now? But she was losing interest. "I still can't understand your null score, David," she told him. "But it does seem to me as if you have no ESP ability whatever." He tried to look disappointed. Apologetic, even. Sorry, teach, I ain't got no ESP. Humbly the deficient boy made his way to his seat.

IN ONE blazing instant of revelation and communion, Miss Mueller, I could have justified your whole lifelong quest for the improbable, the inexplicable, the unknowable, the irrational. The miraculous. But I didn't have the guts to do it. I had to look after my own skin, Miss Mueller. I had to keep a low profile. Will you forgive me? Instead of giving you truth, I faked you out, Miss Mueller, and sent you spinning blindly onward to the tarot, to the signs of the zodiac, to the flying-saucer people, to a thousand surreal vibrations, to a million apocalyptic astral antiworlds, when the touch of my mind against yours might have been enough to heal your madness. One touch from me. In a moment. In the twinkling of an eye.

XVII

AMONG the trivia I had once inadvertently picked up in Tom Nyquist's mind were the results of some EEG and other tests to which he had submitted as a favor for a friend who was doing a Ph. D. thesis on electrical phenomena associated with the human brain and nervous system. Nyquist's brain picture revealed nothing unusual except that the friend picked up, or thought he did, simultaneously identical patterns from Nyquist's head and that of a

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subject whose mind Nyquist was reading—under circumstances that seemed to make the coincidence as remarkable as finding yourself shaking hands with a man whose fingerprints were duplicates of yours. Nyquist was amused by the fact that his friend's subsequent thesis omitted all mention of both the tests and their results—the man wanted his doctorate.

But Nyquist thought, without too much insistence, that perhaps he and I—products of genetic evolution—emit some kind of "electromagnetic" probe that operates as a myriad of electrodes might to soak up the microvolts and frequencies from the skulls of our victims. He once called ours the "superhuman condition." For me the image conjured up is that of the leeching bat creature I found in Toni's mind.

WHEN Toni moved out of my place on 114th Street I waited two days before I did anything. I assumed she would come back when she calmed down. I figured she would call, contrite, from some friend's house and say she was sorry she panicked and would I come get her. Also in those two days I was in no shape to take any sort of action. I was still suffering the after-effects of my vicarious trip. I felt as though someone had seized my head and pulled on it, stretching my neck like a rubber band, letting it finally snap back into place with a sharp *thwock* that addled my brains.

But she didn't come back and she didn't call and on the Tuesday after the acid trip I started searching for her. I phoned her office first. Teddy, her boss, a bland sweet scholarly man, very gentle, very gay. No, she hadn't been to work this week. No, she hadn't been in touch at all. Was it urgent? Would I like to have her home number? "I'm *calling* from her home number," I said. "She isn't here and I don't know where she's gone. This is David Selig, Teddy." "Oh," he said. Very faintly, with great compassion. "Oh." And I said, "If she happens to call in will you tell her to get in touch with me?"

Next I started to phone her friends, those whose numbers I could find: Alice, Doris, Helen, Pam, Grace. Most of them, I knew, didn't like me. I didn't have to be telepathic to realize that. They thought she was throwing herself away on me, wasting her life with a man without career, prospects, money, ambition, talent or looks. All five of them told me they hadn't heard from her. Doris, Helen and Pam sounded sincere. The other two, it seemed to me, were lying.

I took a taxi over to Alice's place in the Village and shot a probe upward, *zam*! nine stories into her head, and I learned a lot

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of things about Alice that I hadn't really wanted to know, but I didn't find out where Toni was. I felt dirty about spying and didn't probe Grace. Instead I called my employer, the writer, whose book Toni was editing, and asked if he'd seen her. Not in weeks, he told me, all ice. Dead end. The trail had run out.

I dithered on Wednesday, wondering what to do, and finally, melodramatically, called the police. Gave a bored desk sergeant her description: tall, thin, long dark hair, brown eyes. No bodies found in Central Park lately? In subway trash cans? The basements of Amsterdam Avenue tenements? No. No. No. Look, buddy, if we hear anything we'll let you know, but it don't sound serious to me. So much for the police. Restless, hopelessly strung out, I walked down to the Great Shanghai for a miserable half-eaten dinner, good food gone to waste. (Children are starving in Europe, Duv. Eat. Eat.)

When I returned home the phone was ringing. Pam. "I've heard from Toni," she said. "She's staying with Bob Larkin at his place over on East Eighty-Third Street."

Jealousy, despair, humiliation.

"Bob who?"

"Larkin. He's that high-bracket interior decorator she always talks about."

"Not to me."

"One of Toni's oldest friends. They're very close. I think he used to date her when she was in high school." A long pause. Then Pam chuckled warmly into my numb silence. "Oh, relax, relax, David! He's gay! He's just a kind of father confessor for her. She goes to him when there's trouble."

"I see."

"You two have broken up, haven't you?"

"I'm not sure. I suppose we have. I don't know."

"Is there anything I can do to help?" This from Pam who, I had always thought, regarded me as a destructive influence of whom Toni was well advised to be quit.

"Just give me his phone number," I said.

I phoned. It rang and rang and rang. At last Bob Larkin picked up. Gay, all right, a sweet tenor voice complete with lisp, not very different from the voice of Teddy-at-work. Who teaches them to speak with the homo accent? I asked, "Is Toni there?" A guarded response: "Who's calling, please?" I told him. He asked me to wait and a minute or so passed while he conferred with her, hand over the mouthpiece. At last he came back and said Toni was there, yes, but she was very tired and resting and didn't want to talk to me right now. "It's urgent," I said. "Please tell her it's urgent." Another muffled conference. Same reply. He suggested vaguely that I call back in two or three days.

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I started to wheedle, to whine, to beg. In the middle of that unheroic performance the phone abruptly changed hands and Toni said to me, "Why did you call?"

"That ought to be obvious. I want you to come back."

"I can't."

She didn't say, *I won't.* She said, *I can't.*

I said, "Would you like to tell me why?"

"Not really."

"You didn't even leave a note. Not a word of explanation. You ran out so fast."

"I'm sorry, David."

"It was something you saw in me while you were tripping, wasn't it?"

"Let's not talk about it," she said. "It's over."

"I don't want it to be over."

"I do."

I do. That was like the sound of a great gate clanging shut in my face. But I wasn't going to let her throw home the bolts just yet. I told her she had left some of her things in my room, some books, some clothing. A lie—she had made a clean sweep. But I can be persuasive when I'm cornered and she began to think what I said might be true. I offered to bring the stuff over right now. She didn't want me to come. She preferred never to see me again, she told me. But her voice lacked conviction. It was higher in pitch and much more nasal than it was when she spoke with sincerity. I knew she still loved me, more or less—even after a forest fire some of the burned snags live on and green new shoots spring from them. So I told myself. Fool that I was. In any case she couldn't entirely turn me away. Talking very fast, I bludgeoned her into yielding. All right, she said. Come over. Come over. But you're wasting your time.

IT WAS close to midnight. The summer air was clinging and clammy, with a hint of rain on the way. No stars were visible. Larkin's apartment was on the nineteenth floor of an immense new terraced white-brick tower, far over on York Avenue. Admitting me, he gave me a tender, compassionate smile as if to say, You poor bastard, you've been hurt and you're bleeding and now you're going to get ripped open again. He was about thirty, a stocky, boyish-faced man with long unruly curly brown hair and large uneven teeth. He radiated warmth and sympathy and kindness. I could understand why Toni ran to him at times like this.

"She's in the living room," he said.

It was a big, impeccable place, somewhat freaky in decor. Jagged blurts of color danced over the walls. Pre-Columbian artifacts gleamed in spotlighted showcases set among bizarre African masks, chrome-steel furniture. The living

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room was the core of the spectacle, a vast white-walled enclosure with a long curving window. Toni sat at the far end, near the window, on an angular couch, dark blue flecked with gold. She wore old, dowdy clothes that clashed furiously with the splendor around her: a motheaten red sweater that I detested, a short frumpy black skirt, dark hose—and she was slumped down sullenly on her spine, leaning on one elbow, her legs jutting awkwardly forward. The posture that made her look bony and ungraceful. A cigarette drooped in her hand and a huge pile of butts heaped the ashtray beside her. Her eyes were bleak. Her long hair was tangled. She didn't move as I walked toward her. Such an aura of hostility came from her that I halted twenty feet away.

"Where's the stuff you were bringing?" she asked.

"There wasn't any. I just said that to have an excuse to see you."

"I figured that."

"What went wrong, Toni?"

"Don't ask. Just don't ask." Her voice had dropped into its lowest register, a bitter husky contralto. "You shouldn't have come here at all."

"If you'd tell me what I did—"

"You tried to hurt me," she said. "You tried to bum-trip me." She stubbed out her cigarette and immediately lit another. Her eyes, somber and hooded, refused to meet mine. "I realized finally that you were my enemy, that I had to escape from you. So I packed and got out."

"Your enemy? You know that isn't true."

"It was strange," she said. "I didn't understand what was happening and I've talked to some people who've dropped a lot of acid and they can't understand it either. It was like our minds were linked, David. Like a telepathic channel had opened between us. And all sorts of stuff was pouring from you into me. Hateful stuff. Poisonous stuff. I was thinking your thoughts. Seeing myself as you saw me. Remember when you said you were tripping too, even though you hadn't had any acid? And then you told me you were, like, reading my mind. That was what scared me. The way our minds seemed to blur together, to overlap. To become one. I never knew acid could do that to people."

This was my cue to tell her that it wasn't only the acid, that it hadn't been some druggy delusion, that what she had felt was the impingement of a special power granted me at birth—a gift, a curse, a freak of nature. But the words congealed in my mouth. They sounded insane to me. How could I confess such stuff? I let the moment pass. Instead I said lamely, "Okay, it was a strange moment for both of us. We were a little out of our heads. But the

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trip is over. You don't have to hide from me now. Come back, Toni."

"No."

"In a few days, then?"

"No."

"I don't understand this."

"Everything's changed," she said. "I couldn't ever live with you now. You scare me too much. The trip is over, but I look at you and I see demons. I see some kind of thing that's half-bat, half-man, with big rubbery wings and long yellow fangs and—oh, Jesus, David, I can't help any of this! I still feel as if our minds are linked. Stuff is creeping out of you into my head. I should never have touched the acid." Carelessly she crushed her cigarette and found another. "You make me uncomfortable now. I wish you'd go. It gives me a headache just being this close to you. Please. Please. I'm sorry, David."

I DIDN'T dare look into her mind. I was afraid that what I'd find there would blast and shrivel me. But in those days my power was still so strong that I couldn't help picking up, whether I sought it or not, a generalized low-level mental radiation from everyone I came close to, and what I picked up now from Toni confirmed what she was saying. She hadn't stopped loving me. But the acid, though lysergic and not sulfuric, had scarred and corroded our relationship by opening that terrible gateway between us. It was torment for her to be in the same room with me. No resources of mine could deal with that. I considered strategies, looked for angles of approach, ways to reason with her, to heal her through soft earnest words. No way. No way at all. I ran a dozen trial dialogs in my head and they all ended with Toni begging me to get out of her life. So. The end. She sat there all but motionless, downcast, dark-faced, her wide mouth clamped in pain, her brilliant smile extinguished. She seemed to have aged twenty years. Her odd, exotic desert-princess beauty had wholly fled from her. Suddenly she was more real to me in her shroud of pain than ever before. Ablaze with suffering, alive with anguish. And no way for me to reach her.

"All right," I said quietly. "I'm sorry too."

Over, done with, swiftly, suddenly, no warning, the bullet singing through the air, the grenade rolling treacherously into the tent, the anvil falling from the placid sky. Done with. Alone again. Not even any tears. Cry? What shall I cry?

Bob Larkin had tactfully remained outside, in his long foyer papered with dazzling black and white optical illusions, during our brief muffled conversation. Again the gentle sorrowing smile from him as I emerged.

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"Thanks for letting me bother you this late," I said.

"No trouble at all. Too bad about you and Toni."

We faced each other uncertainly and he moved toward me, digging his fingers momentarily into the muscle of my arm, telling me without words to shape up, to ride out the storm, to get myself together. He was so open that my mind sank unexpectedly into his and I saw him plain, his goodness, his kindness, his sorrow. Out of him an image rose to me, a sharp encapsulated memory: himself and a sobbing, demolished Toni, the night before last, lying naked together on his modish round bed, her head cradled against his muscular hairy chest. Her body trembling with need. He struggling to offer her the consolation of sex. His gentle spirit at war with itself, flooded with pity and love for her but dismayed by her disturbing femaleness. You don't have to, Bob, she keeps saying, you don't have to, you really don't have to, but he tells her he wants to, it's about time we made it after knowing each other all these years. It'll cheer you up, Toni, and anyway a man needs a little variety, right? His heart goes out to her but his body resists and their lovemaking, when it happens, is a hurried, pathetic, fumbled thing, a butting of troubled reluctant bodies, ending in tears, tremors, shared distress and, finally, laughter, a triumph over pain. He kisses her tears away. She thanks him gravely for his efforts. They fall into childlike sleep, side by side. How civilized, how tender. My poor Toni. Goodbye. Goodbye. "I'm glad she went to you," I said. He walked me to the elevator. What shall I cry? "If she snaps out of it I'll make sure she calls you," he told me. I put my hand to his arm as he had to mine, and gave him the best smile in my repertoire. Goodbye.

XVIII

THIS is my cave. Twelve floors high in the Marble Hill Houses, Broadway and 228th Street, formerly a middle-income municipal housing project, now a catchall for classless and deracinated urban detritus. Two rooms plus bathroom, kitchenette, hallway. Once upon a time you couldn't get into this project unless you were married and had kids. Nowadays a few singles have slipped in, on the grounds that they're destitute. Things change as the city decays —regulations break down.

Would you like the guided tour of David Selig's cave? Very well. Please come this way. No touching anything, please, and don't park your chewing gum on the furniture. The sensitive, intelligent, amiable, neurotic man who will be your guide is none other than David Selig himself. No tipping allowed. Welcome, folks, welcome to my

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humble abode. We'll begin our tour in the bathroom. See, this is the tub—that yellow stain in the porcelain was already there when he moved in—this is the crapper, this is the medicine chest. Selig spends a great deal of time in here—it's a room significant to any in-depth understanding of his existence. For example, he sometimes takes two or three showers a day. What is it, do you think, that he's trying to wash away? Leave that toothbrush alone, sonny. All right, come with me. Do you see these posters in the hallway? They are artifacts of the 1960's. This one shows the poet Allan Ginsberg in the costume of Uncle Sam. This one is a crude vulgarization of a subtle topological paradox by the Dutch printmaker, M. G. Escher. Eight to ten years ago hundreds of thousands of young people decorated their rooms with such posters. Selig, although he was not exactly young even then, did the same. He often has followed current fads and modes in an attempt to affiliate himself more firmly with the structures of contemporary existence.

This room is the bedroom. Dark and narrow, with the low ceiling typical of municipal construction a generation ago. This is his bed, in which he dreams uneasy dreams, occasionally, even now, reading the minds of his neighbors and incorporating their thoughts in his fantasies. On this bed he has fornicated maybe fifteen women, once or twice or sometimes three times each, during the two and a half years of his residence here. Don't look so abashed, young lady! Sex is a healthy human endeavor and it remains an essential aspect of Selig's life, even now in middle age! It may become even more important to him in the years ahead, for sex is, after all, a way of establishing communication with other human beings and certain other channels of communication appear to be closing for him. Who are these girls? Some of them are not girls. Some are women well along in life. He charms them in his diffident way and persuades them to share an hour of joy with him. He rarely invites any of them back and those whom he does invite back often refuse the invitation, but that's all right. His needs are met. Please don't sit on his bed. It's an old one, bought second-hand at an upstairs bargain basement that the Salvation Army runs in Harlem. I picked it up for a few bucks when I moved out of my last place, a furnished room on St. Nicholas Avenue, and needed some furniture of my own. What else is in the bedroom? Very little of interest, I'm afraid. A chest of drawers containing commonplace clothing. A pair of worn slippers. A cracked mirror—are you superstitious? A lopsided bookcase packed tight with old magazines that he will never look at again—

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Partisan Review, Evergreen, Paris Review, New York Review of Books, Encounter. A mound of trendy literary stuff, plus a few journals of psychoanalysis and psychiatry, which Selig reads sporadically in the hope of increasing his self-knowledge. He always tosses them aside in boredom and disappointment. Let's get out of here. This room must be depressing you. We go past the kitchenette—four-burner stove, half-size refrigerator, formica-topped table—where he assembles very modest breakfasts and lunches (dinner he usually eats out) and enter the main focus of the apartment, the L-shaped blue-walled jam-packed living room/study.

HERE you can observe the full range of Daivd Selig's intellectual development. This is his record collection, about a hundred well-worn disks, some of them purchased as far back as 1951. Almost entirely classical music, although you will note two intrusive deposits, five or six jazz records dating from 1959 and five or six rock records dating from 1969, both groups acquired in vague, abortive efforts at expanding the horizons of his taste. Otherwise what you will find here, in the main, is pretty austere stuff, thorny, inaccessible: Schoenberg, late Beethoven, Mahler, Berg, the Bartok quartets, Bach passacaglias. Nothing that you'd be likely to whistle after one hearing. He doesn't know a lot about music, but he knows what he likes—you wouldn't much care for it.

And these are his books, accumulated since the age of ten and hauled lovingly about with him from place to place. The archaeological strata of his reading can readily be isolated and examined. Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, Mark Twain, Dashiell Hammett at the bottom. Sabatini. Kipling. Van Loon, *The Story of Mankind.* Verrill, *Great Conquerors of South and Central America.* The books of a sober, earnest, alienated little boy. Suddenly, with adolescence, a quantum leap: Orwell, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Hardy, the easier Faulkner. Look at these rare paperbacks of the 1940's and early 1950's, in odd off-sized formats, with laminated plastic covers! See what you could buy then for only 25¢! These science-fiction books date from that era too. I gobbled the stuff whole, hoping to find some clues to my own dislocated self's nature in the fantasies of Bradbury, Heinlein, Asimov, Sturgeon, Clarke. Look, here's Stapledon's *Odd John,* here's Beresford's *Hampdenshire Wonder,* here's a whole book called *Outsiders: Children of Wonder,* full of stories of little superbrats with freaky powers. I've underlined a lot of passages in that last one, usually places where I quarreled with the writers. *Outsiders*? Those writers,

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gifted as they were, were the outsiders, trying to imagine powers they had never had, and I who was on the inside, I the youthful mind-prowler (the book is dated 1954), had bones to pick with them. They stressed the angst of being supernormal, forgot about the ecstasy. Although, thinking about angst vs. ecstasy now, I have to admit they knew whereof they writ. Fellows, I have fewer bones to pick these days. This is rats' alley, where the dead men lost their bones.

Observe how Selig's reading becomes more rarefied as we reach the college years. Joyce, Proust, Mann, Eliot, Pound, the old avant-garde hierarchy. The French period: Zola, Balzac, Montaigne, Celine, Baudelaire. This thick slug of Dostoyevsky occupying half a shelf. Lawrence. Woolf. The mystical era: Augustine, Aquinas, the *Tao Te Ching*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The psychological era: Freud, Jung, Adler, Reich, Reik. The philosophical era. The Marxist era. All that Koestler. Back to literature: Conrad, Forster, Beckett. Moving on toward the fractured '50's: Bellow, Pynchon, Malamud, Mailer, Burroughs, Barth. *Catch-22* and *The Politics of Experience*. Oh, yes, ladies and gentlemen, you are in the presence of a well-read man!

Here we have his files. A treasure-trove of personalia awaiting a biographer yet unknown. Report cards, always with low marks for conduct. ("David shows little interest in his work and frequently disrupts the class.") Crudely crayoned birthday cards for his mother and father. Old photographs—can this fat freckled boy be the gaunt individual who stands before you now? This man with the high forehead and the forced, rigid smile is the late Paul Selig, father of our subject, deceased 11 August 1971 of complications following surgery for a perforated ulcer. This gray-haired woman with the hyperthyroid eyes is the late Martha Selig, wife of Paul, mother of David, deceased 15 March 1973 of mysterious rot of internal organs, probably cancerous. This grim young lady with cold knifeblade face is Judith Hannah Selig, adopted child of P. and M., unloving sister of D. Date on back of photo: July 1963. Judith is therefore eighteen years old and in the summertime of her hate for me. How much she looks like Toni in this picture! I never noticed the resemblance before, but they've got the same dusky Yemenite look, the same long black hair. But Toni's eyes were always warm and loving—except right at the very end—Jude's eyes never held anything for me other than ice, ice, Plutonian ice. Let us continue with the examination of David Selig's private effects. This is his collection of essays and term papers, written during his college years.

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How fortunate for D. Selig that he kept all this literary twaddle—here in his later years these papers have become the capital on which he lives, for you know, of course, how the central figure of our investigations earns his livelihood nowadays.

WHAT else do we find in these archives? The carbon copies of innumerable letters. Some of them are quite impersonal missives. *Dear President Eisenhower. Dear Pope John. Dear Secretary-General Hammarskjold.* Quite often once—though rarely in recent years—he launched these letters to far corners of the globe. His fitful unilateral efforts at making contact with a deaf world. His troubled futile attempts at restoring order in a universe plainly tumbling toward the ultimate thermodynamic doom. Shall we look at a few of these documents?

. . . You say, Governor Rockefeller, that "with nuclear weapons multiplying our security is dependent on the credibility of our willingness to resort to our deterrent. It is our heavy responsibility as public officials and as citizens to save the lives and to protect the health of our people. A lagging civil-defense effort cannot be excused by our conviction that nuclear war is a tragedy and that we must strive by all honorable means to assure peace." Permit me to disagree. Your bomb-shelter program, Governor, is the project of a morally impoverished mind. To divert energy and resources from the search for a lasting peace to this ostrich-in-the-sand scheme is, I think, a foolish and dangerous policy that. . . .

The Governor, by way of replying, sent his thanks and an offprint of the very speech Selig was protesting. Can one expect more?

. . . Mr. Nixon, your entire campaign is pitched to the theory that America never had it so good under President Eisenhower, and so let's have four more years of the same. To me you sound like Faust, crying out to the passing moment, Bleibe doch, du bist so schoen! *(Am I too literate for you, Mr. Vice President?) Please bear in mind that when Faust utters those words, Mephistopheles arrives to collect his soul. Does it honestly seem to you that this instant in history is so sweet that you would stop the clocks forever? Listen to the anguish in the land. Listen to the voices of Mississippi's Negroes, listen to the cries of the hungry children of factory workers thrown out of work by a Republican recession, listen to . . . .*

Dear Mrs. Hemingway: Please allow me to add my words to the thousands expressing sorrow at the death of your husband. The bravery he showed in the face of a life-situation that had become unendurable and intolerable is indeed an example for those of us who. . .

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Dear Dr. Buber. . . Dear Professor Toynbee. . . Dear President Nehru. . . Dear Mr. Pound: The whole civilized world rejoices with you upon your liberation from the curel and unnatural confinement which. . . Dear Lord Russell. . . Dear Chairman Khrushchev. . . Dear M. Malraux. . . Dear. . . Dear . . . Dear. . . A remarkable collection of correspondence, you must agree. With equally remarkable replies. See, this answer says, *You may be right,* and this one says, *I am grateful for your interest,* and this one says, *Of course time does not permit individual replies to all letters received, but nevertheless please be assured that your thoughts will receive careful consideration,* and this one says, *Send this bastard the bedbug letter.*

Unfortunately we do not have the imaginary letters which he dictates constantly to himself but never sends. *Dear Mr. Kierkegaard: I agree entirely with your celebrated dictum equating "the absurd" with "the fact that with God all things are possible," and declaring, "The absurd is not one of the factors which can be discriminated within the proper compass of the understanding: it is not identical with the improbable, the unexpected, the unforeseen." In my own experience with the absurd. . . Dear Mr. Shakespeare: How aptly you put it when you say, "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds, Or bends with the remover to remove." Your sonnet, however, begs the question: if love is not love, what then is it, that feeling of closeness which can be so absurdly and unexpectedly destroyed by a trifle? If you could suggest some alternate existential mode of relating to others that. . .*

Since they are transient, the product of vagrant impulses, and often incomprehensible, we have no satisfactory access to such communications, which Selig sometimes produces at a rate of hundreds per hour. *Dear Mr. Justice Holmes: In Southern Pacific Co. v. Jensen, 244 U.S. 205, 221* [1917], *you ruled, "I recognize without hesitation that judges do and must legislate, but they can do so only interstitially; they are confined from molar to molecular motions." This splendid metaphor is not entirely clear to me, I must confess, and. . .*

> Dear Mr. Selig:
>
> The present state of the world and the whole of life is diseased. If I were a doctor and were asked for my advice, I should reply, "Create silence."
>
> Yours very sincerely,
> Sören Kierkegaard
> (1813-1855)

AND then there are these three folders here, thick beige cardboard. They are not available for public inspection, since they con-

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tain letters of a rather more personal kind. Under the terms of our agreement with the David Selig Foundation I am forbidden to quote, though I may paraphrase. These are his letters to—and occasionally from—the girls he has loved or has wanted to love. The earliest is dated 1950 and bears the notation at the top in large red letters, NEVER SENT. *Dear Beverly,* it begins, and it is full of embarrassingly graphic sexual imagery. What can you tell us about this Beverly, Selig?

Well, she was short and cute and freckled, with big headlights and a sunny disposition and sat in front of me in my biology class. She had a creepy twin sister, Estelle, who scowled a lot and through some fluke of genetics was as flat as Beverly was bosomy. Maybe that was why she scowled so much. I used to wander barefoot in Beverly's mind while the teacher, Miss Mueller, droned on about mitosis and chromosomes. She had just yielded her cherry to Victor Schlitz, the big rawboned green-eyed redhaired boy who sat next to her. I learned a lot about sex from her at one remove, with a 12-hour timelag, as she radiated every morning her adventure of the night before with Victor. I wasn't jealous of him. He was handsome and self-confident and deserved her, and I was too shy and insecure to lay anybody anyway, then. So I rode secretly piggyback on their romance and fantasized doing with Beverly the gaudy things Victor was doing with her, until my explorations of her head told me that to her I was just an amusing gnomish child, an oddity, a jester. How then to score? I wrote her this letter, describing in vivid sweaty detail everything that she and Victor had been up to, and said, Don't you wonder how I know all this, heh heh heh? The implication being that I'm some kind of superman with the power to penetrate the intimacies of a woman's mind. I figured that would topple her right into my arms in a swoon of awe, but some second thoughts led me to see that she would either think I was crazy or a peeping tom. And would in either case be wholly turned off me. I filed the letter away undelivered.

Most of the letters in this file date between 1954 and 1968. The most recent was written in the autumn of 1974, after which time Selig began to feel less and less in touch with the rest of the human race and stopped writing letters, except in his head. I don't know how many girls are represented here but there must have been quite a few. Generally these were all superficial affairs, for Selig, as you know, never married or even had many serious involvements with women.

At times he made use of his special gifts knowingly to exploit women sexually, especially at about

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the age of twenty-five. He is not proud of that period. Wouldn't you like to read these letters, you stinking voyeurs? But you won't. You won't get your paws on them.

Why have I invited you in here, anyway? Why do I let you peer at my books and my photographs and my unwashed dishes and my stained bathtub? It must be that my sense of self is slipping. Isolation is choking me. The windows are closed but at least I've opened the door. I need you to bolster my grip on reality by looking into my life, by incorporating parts of it into your own experience, by discovering that I'm real, I exist, I suffer, I have a past if not a future. So that you can go away from here saying, Yes, I know David Selig, actually I know him quite well. But that doesn't mean I have to show you everything. Hey, here's a letter to Amy! Amy who relieved me of my festering virginity in the spring of 1953. Wouldn't you like to know the story of how that happened? Anybody's first time has an irresistible fascination. Well, I don't feel like discussing it. It isn't much of a story anyway. Make up the details yourself.

Where's Amy now? Amy's dead. She died in an auto accident at the age of twenty-three and her husband, who knew me vaguely, phoned me to tell me, since I had once been a friend of hers. He was still in trauma because the police had made him come down to identify the body and she had really been destroyed, mangled, mutilated. Like something from another planet, that's how she looked, he told me. Catapulted through the windshield and into a tree. And I told him, "Amy was the first girl I ever slept with," and he started consoling me. He, consoling me, and I had only been trying to be sadistic.

Time passes. Amy's dead and Beverly's a pudgy middle-aged housewife, I bet. Here's a letter to Jackie Newhouse, telling her I can't sleep for thinking about her. Jackie Newhouse? Who that? Oh, yes. Five feet two and a pair of boobs that would have made Marilyn Monroe feel topheavy. Sweet. Dumb. Puckered lips, baby-blue eyes. Jackie had nothing going for her at all except her bosom, but that was enough for me, seventeen years old and hung up on breasts, God knows why. I loved her for her mammaries, so globular and conspicuous in the tight white polo shirts she liked to wear. Summer of 1952. She loved Frank Sinatra and Perry Como, and had FRANKIE written in lipstick down the left thigh of her jeans and PERRY on the right. She also loved her history teacher, whose name, I think, was Leon Sissinger or Zippinger or something like that, and she had LEON on her jeans too, from hip to hip.

I kissed her twice but that was all. She was even more shy than I,

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terrified that some hideous male hand would violate the purity of those mighty knockers. I followed her around, trying not to get into her head because it depressed me to see how empty it was. How did it end? Oh, yes. Her kid brother Arnie was telling me how he sees her naked at home all the time and I, desperate for a vicarious glimpse of her bare breasts, plunged into his skull and stole a second-hand peek. I hadn't realized until then how important a bra can be. Unbound, they hung to her plump little belly, two mounds of dangling meat crisscrossed by bulging blue veins. Cured me of my fixation. So long ago, so unreal to me now, Jackie.

Here. Look. Spy on me. My fervid frenzied outpourings of love. Read them all, what do I care? Donna, Elsie, Magda, Mona, Sue, Lois, Karen. Did you think I was deprived? Did you think my lame adolescence sent me stumbling into manhood incapable of finding women? Dear Connie, what a wild night that was! Dear Chiquita, your perfume still lingers in the air. Dear Elaine, when I woke this morning the taste of you was on my lips. Dear Kitty, I—

Oh, God. Kitty. *Dear Kitty, I have so much to explain to you that I don't know where to begin. You never understood me, and I never understood you, and so the love I had for you was fated to bring us to a bad pass sooner or later. Which it now has. The failures of communication extended all up and down our relationship, but because you were different from any person I had ever known, truly and qualitatively different, I made you the center of my fantasies and could not accept you as you were, but had to keep hammering and hammering and hammering away at you, until*— Oh, God. This one's too painful. What the hell are you doing reading someone else's mail? Don't you have any decency? I can't show you this. The tour's over. Out! Out! Everybody out! For Christ's sake, get *out*!

TUESDAY. Election Day. For months the clamor of the campaign has fouled the air. The free world is choosing its new maximum leader. The sound-trucks rumble along Broadway, belching slogans. Our next President. The man for all America. Vote! Vote! Vote! Vote for X! Vote for Y! The hollow words merge and blur and flow. Republocrat. Demican. *Boum*. Why should I vote? I will not vote. I do not vote. I am not plugged in. I am not part of the circuit. Voting is for *them*. Once, in the late autumn of 1968, I think it was, I was standing outside Carnegie Hall when suddenly all traffic halted on 57th. A motorcade came rumbling out of the east and lo! in a dark black limousine rode Richard M. Nixon, President-elect of the

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United States of America. My big chance at last, I thought. I will look into his mind and make myself privy to great secrets of state. I will discover what is is about our leaders that sets them apart from ordinary mortals. I looked into his mind and what I found in there I will not tell you, except to say that it was more or less what I should have expected to find. And since that day I have had nothing to do with politics or politicians. Today I stay home from the polls. Let them elect the next President without my help.

WEDNESDAY. I doodle with Yahya Lumumba's half-finished term paper and other such projects. Getting nowhere. Judith calls. "A party," she says. "You're invited. Everybody'll be there."

"A party? Who? Where? Why? When?"

"Saturday night. Near Columbia. The host is Claude Guermantes. Do you know him? Professor of French Literature." No, the name is not Guermantes. I have changed the name to protect the guilty. "He's one of those charismatic new professors. Young, dynamic, handsome, a friend of Simone de Beauvoir, of Genet. Karl and I are coming. And a lot of others. He always invites the most interesting people."

"Genet? Simone de Beauvoir? Will they be there?"

"No, silly, not them. But it'll be worth your time. Claude gives the best parties of anybody I know. Brilliant combinations of people."

"Sounds like a vampire to me."

"He gives as well as takes, Duv. He specifically asked me to invite you."

"How does he know me at all?"

"Through me," she says. "I've talked of you. He's dying to meet you."

"I don't like parties."

"*Duv*—"

I know that warning tone of voice. I have no stomach for a hassle just now. "All right," I say, sighing. "Saturday night. Give me the address." Why am I so pliable? Why do I let Judith manipulate me? Is this how I build my love for her, through these surrenders?

THURSDAY. I do two paragraphs in the A.M. for Yahya Lumumba. Very apprehensive about his reaction to the thing I'm writing for him. He might just loathe it. If I ever finish it. I *must* finish it. Never missed a deadline yet. Don't dare to. In the P.M. I walk up to the 230th Street bookstore, needing fresh air and wanting, as usual, to see if anything interesting has come out since my last visit three days before. Compulsively I buy a few paperbacks—an anthology of minor metaphysical poets, Updike's *Rabbit Redux* and a heavy Levi-Straussian anthropological study, folkways of some Amazonian tribe, that I know

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I'll never get around to reading. A new clerk at the cash register: a girl nineteen or twenty, pale, blond, white silk blouse, short plaid skirt. Attractive in a vacant-eyed way. She isn't at all interesting to me sexually or otherwise. As I think that I chide myself for putting her down—let nothing human be alien to me—and on a whim I invade her mind as I pay for my books. I burrow in easily, deep, down through layer after layer of trivia, mining her without hindrance, getting right to the real stuff. Oh! What a sudden blazing communion, soul to soul! She glows. She streams fire. She comes to me with a vividness and a completeness that stun me, so rare has this sort of experience become for me. No dumb pallid mannequin now. I see her full and entire, her dreams, her fantasies, her ambitions, her loves, her soaring ecstasies (last night's gasping copulation and the shame and guilt afterward), a whole churning steaming sizzling human soul. Only once in the last six months have I hit this quality of total contact, only once, that awful day with Yahya Lumumba on the steps of Low Library. And as I remember that searing, numbing experience something is triggered in me and the same thing happens. A dark curtain falls. I am disconnected. My grip on her consciousness is severed. Silence, that terrible mental silence, rushes to enfold me. I stand there, gaping, stunned, alone again and frightened. I start to shake and drop my change and she says to me, worried, "Sir? *Sir?*" in that sweet fluting little-girl voice.

FRIDAY. Wake up with aches, high fever. Undoubtedly an attack of psychosomatic ague. The angry, embittered mind mercilessly flagellating the defenseless body. Chills followed by hot sweats followed by chills. Empty-gut puking. I feel hollow. Headpiece filled with straw. Alas! Can't work. I scribble a few pseudo-Lumumba-esque lines and toss the sheet away. Sick as a dog. Well, a good excuse not to go to that dumb party, anyhow.

Felt better after a while. I should call Judith. Have her make some chicken soup for me. *Oy, veh. Veh ist mir.*

SATURDAY. Without help of chicken soup I recover and decide to go to the party. *Veh ist mir,* in spades. Why has David allowed Judith to drag him from his cave? An endless subway ride downtown. At last the familiar Columbia station. I must walk a few blocks, shivering, not dressed properly for the wintry weather, to the huge old apartment house at Riverside Drive and 112th Street where Claude Guermantes is reputed to live. I stand hesitantly outside. A cold, sour breeze ripping malevolently across the Hud-

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son at me, bearing the windborne detritus of New Jersey. Dead leaves swirling in the park. A mahogany doorman eyes me fishily.

"Professor Guermantes?" I say.

He jerks a thumb. "Seventh floor, 7-G." Waving me toward the elevator.

I'm late—now it's almost ten o'clock. Upstairs in the weary Otis, creak creak creak creak, elevator door rolls back, silkscreen poster in the hallway proclaims the route to Guermantes' lair. A high-decibel roar from the left tells me where the action is. I ring the bell. Wait. Nothing. Ring again. Party's too loud for them to hear me. Oh, to be able to transmit thoughts instead of just to receive them! I'd announce myself in tones of thunder. Ring again, more aggressively. Ah! Yes! Door opens. Short dark-haired girl, undergraduate-looking, wearing a sort of orange sari that leaves her right breast—small—bare. Nudity a la mode. Flashes her teeth gaily. "Come in, come in, come in!"

A mob scene. Eighty, ninety, a hundred people, everyone dressed in Seventies Flamboyant, gathered in groups of eight to ten, shouting profundities at one another. Those who hold no highballs are busily passing joints, ritualistic hissing intake of breath, much coughing, passionate exhaling. Before I have my coat off someone pops an elaborate ivory-headed pipe in my mouth. "Super hash," he explains. "Just in from Damascus. Come on, man, toke up!" I suck smoke willy-nilly and feel an immediate effect. I blink. "Yeah," my benefactor shouts. "It's got the power to cloud men's minds, don't it?" In this mob my mind is already pretty well clouded, however, sans cannabis, solely from input overload. My power seems to be functioning at reasonably high intensity tonight, only without much differentiation of persons.

I am involuntarily taking in a thick soup of overlapping transmissions, a chaos of merging thoughts. Murky stuff. Pipe and passer vanish and I stumble stonedly forward into a cluttered room lined from floor to ceiling with crammed bookcases. I catch sight of Judith just as she catches sight of me, and from her on a direct line of contact comes her outflow, fiercely vivid at first, trailing off in moments into mush: *brother, pain, love, fear, shared memories, forgiveness, forgetting, hatred, hostility, murmphness, froómz, zzzhhh, mmm. Brother. Love. Hate. Zzzhhh.*

"Duv!" she cries. "Oh, here I am, Duvid!"

JUDITH looks sexy tonight. Her long lithe body is sheathed in a purple satiny wrap, skin-tight, throat-high, plainly showing her breasts and the little bumps of her nipples and the cleft between her

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buttocks. On her bosom nestles a glittering slab of gold-rimmed jade, intricately carved. Her hair, unbound, tumbles gloriously. I feel pride in her beauty. She is flanked by two impressive-looking men. On one side is Dr. Karl F. Silvestri, author of *Studies in the Physiology of Thermoregulation.* He corresponds fairly closely to the image of him that I had plucked from Judith's mind at her apartment a week or two ago, though he is older than I had guessed, at least fifty-five, maybe closer to sixty. Bigger, too—perhaps six feet five. He has florid cheeks, a stolid self-satisfied facial expression, tender intelligent eyes. He radiates something avuncular or even paternal toward her. I see why Jude is attracted to him—he is the powerful father figure that poor beaten Paul Selig never could have been for her. On Judith's other side is a man whom I suspect to be Professor Claude Guermantes.

I bounce a quick probe into him and confirm that guess. His mind is quicksilver, a glittering, shimmering pool. He thinks in three or four languages at once. His rampaging energy exhausts me at a single touch. He is about forty, just under six feet tall, muscular, athletics. He wears his elegant sandy hair in swirling baroque waves and his short goatee is impeccably clipped. His clothing is so advanced in style that I lack the vocabulary to describe it, being unaware of fashions myself—a kind of mantle of coarse green and gold fabric (linen? muslin?), a scarlet sash, flaring satin trousers, turned-up pointed-toed medieval boots. His dandyish appearance and mannered posture suggest that he might be gay, but he gives off a powerful aura of heterosexuality. From Judith's stance and fond way of looking at him I begin to realize that he and she must once have been lovers. May still be. I am shy about probing that. My raids on Judith's privacy are too sore a point between us.

"I'd like you to meet my brother David," Judith says.

Silvestri beams. "I've heard so much about you, Mr. Selig."

"Have you really?" (*I've got this freak of a brother, Karl. Would you believe it? He can actually read minds. Your thoughts are as clear as a radio broadcast to him.*) How much has Judith actually revealed about me? I'll try to probe him and see. "And call me David. You're Dr. Silvestri, right?"

"That's right. Karl. I'd prefer Karl."

"I've heard a lot about you from Jude," I say. No go on the probe. My abominable waning gifts—I get only sputtering bits of static, misty scraps of unintelligible thought. His mind is opaque to me. My head starts to throb. "She showed me two of your books."

A pleased chuckle from lofty Silvestri. Judith meanwhile has

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begun to introduce me to Guermantes. He murmurs his delight at making my acquaintance. I half expect him to kiss my cheeks or maybe my hand. His voice is soft, purring—it carries an accent, but not a French one. Something strange, a mixture, Franco-Italic, maybe, or Franco-Hispanic. Him at least I can probe even now—somehow his mind, more volatile than Silvestri's, remains within my reach. I slither in and take a look. Christ! Casanova Redivivus! He's slept with everything that walks or crawls, masculine feminine neuter, including of course my accessible sister Judith. The professor is speculating in a civilized way on the possibilities of nailing me before the night is out. No hope, professor. I will not be added to your Selig collection. He asks me pleasantly about my degrees.

"Just one," I say. "A B.A. in 'fifty-six. I thought about doing graduate work in English literature but never got around to it."

He teaches Rimbaud, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Baudelaire, Lautréamont, that whole sick crew, and identifies with them spiritually. As he talks to me he fondles Judith's shoulderblades affectionately, proprietorially. Dr. Silvestri appears not to notice, or else not to care.

"Your sister," Guermantes murmurs, "she is a marvel, she is an original, a splendor—a *type,* M'sieu' Selig, a *type.*" A compliment, in the froggish sense. He fascinates me—so blatant, so phony, so manipulative and yet so attractive despite all his transparent failings. He offers me cocktails, highballs, liquers, brandies, pot, hash, cocaine, anything I crave. I feel engulfed and escape from him in some relief, slipping away to pour a little rum.

A GIRL accosts me at th table. One of Gu students, no more than Coarse black hair tumbling ringlets, pug nose, fierce perceptive eyes, full fleshy lips. Not beautiful but somehow interesting. Evidently I interest her, too, for she grins at me and asks, "Would you like to go home with me?"

"I just got here."

"Later. Later. No hurry."

"Do you say that to everybody you've just met?"

"We haven't even met," she points out. "And no, I don't say it to everybody. To lots, though. What's wrong? Girls can take the initiative these days. Besides, it's leap year. Are you a poet?"

"Not really."

"You look like one. I bet you're sensitive and you suffer a lot." My familiar dopy fantasy, coming to life before my eyes. *Her* eyes are red-rimmed. She's stoned. Her legs are too short for her torso, her hips too wide, her breasts too heavy. Is she putting me on? *I bet you're sensitive and you suffer a*

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lot. Are you a poet? I try to explore her, but it's useless. Fatigue is blanking my mind and the collective shriek of the massed mob of partygoers is drowning out all individual outputs. "What's your name?" she asks.

"David Selig."

"Lisa Holstein. I'm a senior at Barn—"

Holstein?" The name triggers .e. Kitty, Kitty, Kitty! "Is that what you said? Holstein?"

"Holstein, yes, and spare me the cow jokes."

"Do you have a sister named Kitty? Catherine, I guess. Kitty Holstein. About thirty-five years old. Your sister, maybe your cousin—"

"No. Never heard of her. Someone you know?"

"Used to know," I say. "Kitty Holstein." I pick up my drink and turn away.

"Hey," she calls after me. "Did you think I was kidding? Do you want to go home with me tonight or don't you?"

"TOM NYQUIST—"

The name leaps suddenly, startlingly, out of the white-noise background hum of party chatter. For an instant it hangs in the smoky air like a dead leaf caught by a lazy October breeze. Who said "Tom Nyquist" just then? Who was it who spoke his name? A pleasant baritone voice no more than a dozen feet from me. I look for likely owners of that voice. Men all around. You? You? You? No way of telling. Yes, one way. When words are spoken aloud, they reverberate in the mind of the speaker for a short while. (Also in the minds of his hearers, but the reverberations are different in tonality.) I summon my slippery skill and, straining, force needles of inquiry into the nearby consciousnessness, hunting for echoes. The effort is murderously great. The skulls I enter are solid bony domes through whose few crevices I struggle to ram my limp, feeble probes. But I enter. I seek the proper reverberations. *Tom Nyquist? Tom Nyquist?* Who spoke his name? You? You? Ah. There. The echo is almost gone, just a dim hollow clangor at the far end of a cavern. A tall plump man with a comic fringe of blond beard.

"Excuse me," I say. "I didn't mean to eavesdrop, but I heard you mention the name of a very old friend of mine—"

"Oh?"

"—and I couldn't help coming over to ask you about him. Tom Nyquist. He and I were once very close. If you know where he is now, what he's doing—"

"Tom Nyquist?"

"Yes. I'm sure I heard you mention him."

A blank smile. "I'm afraid there's been a mistake. I don't

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know anyone by that name. Jim? Fred? Can you help?"

"But I'm positive I heard—" The echo. *Boum* in the cave. Was I mistaken? At close range I try to get inside his head, to hunt in his filing system for any knowledge of Nyquist. But I can't function at all, now. They are conferring earnestly. Nyquist? Nyquist? Did anybody hear a Nyquist mentioned? Does anyone know a Nyquist?

One of them suddenly cries, "John Leibnitz!"

"Yes," says the plump one happily. "Maybe that's whom you heard me mention. I was talking about John Leibnitz a few moments ago. A mutual friend. In this racket that might very well have sounded Nyquist to you."

Leibnitz. Nyquist. Leibnitz. Nyquist. *Boum. Boum.* "Quite possibly," I agree. "No doubt that's what happened. Silly of me." John Leibnitz. "Sorry to have bothered you."

GUERMANTES says, mincing and prancing at my elbow, "You really must audit my class one of these days. This Wednesday afternoon I start Rimbaud and Verlaine. Do come around. You'll be on campus Wednesday, won't you?"

Wednesday is the day I must deliver Yahya Lumumba's term paper on the Greek tragedians. I'll be on campus, yes. I'd better be. But how does Guermantes know that? Is he getting into my head somehow? What if he has the gift, too? And I'm wide open to him, he knows everything, my poor pathetic secret, my daily increment of loss and there he stands, patronizing me because I'm failing and he's as sharp as I ever was? Then a quick paranoiac flash—not only does he have the gift but perhaps he's some kind of telepathic leech, draining me, bleeding the power right out of my mind and into his. Perhaps he's been tapping me on the sly ever since '74.

I shake these useless idiocies away. "I expect to be around on Wednesday. Maybe I'll drop in."

There is no chance whatever that I will go to hear Claude Guermantes lecture on Rimbaud or Verlaine. If he's got the power, let him put that in his pipe and smoke it.

"I'd love it if you came," he tells me. He leans close to me. I smell hair tonic, shaving lotion, deodorant and other perfumes. A small blessing—not all my senses are dwindling at once. "Your sister," he murmurs. "Marvelous woman. How I love her! She speaks often of you."

"Does she?"

"With great love. Also with great guilt. It seems you and she were estranged for many years."

"That's over now. We're finally becoming friends."

"How wonderful for you both."

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He gestures with a flick of his eyes. "That doctor. No good for her. Too old, too static. After fifty, most men lose the capacity to grow. He'll bore her to death in six months."

"Maybe boredom is what she needs," I reply. "She's had an exciting life. It hasn't made her happy."

"No one ever needs boredom," Guermantes says and winks.

"KARL and I would love to have you come for dinner next week, Duv. There's so much we three need to talk about."

"I'll see, Jude. I'm not sure about anything about next week yet. I'll call you."

Lisa Holstein. John Leibnitz. I think I need another drink.

SUNDAY. Greatly overhung. Hash, rum, wine, pot—God knows what else. And somebody popping amyl nitrite under my nose about two in the morning. That filthy party. I should never have gone. My head, my head, my head. Where's the typewriter? I've got to get some work done. Let's go, then:

> We see, thus, the difference in the method of approach of these three tragedians to the same story. Aeschylus' primary concern is theological implications of the crime and the inexorable workings of the gods: Orestes is torn between the command of Apollo to slay his mother and his own fear of matricide, and he goes mad as a result. Euripides dwells on the characterization, and takes a less allegorical

No damned good. Save it for later.

Silence between my ears. The echoing black void. I have nothing going for me at all today, nothing. I think it may be completely gone. I can't even pick up the clamor of the spics next door. November is the cruelest month, breeding onions out of the dead mind. I'm living an Eliot poem. I'm turning into words on a page. Shall I sit here feeling sorry for myself? No. No. No. No. I'll fight back. Spiritual exercises designed to restore my power. On your knees, Selig. Bow the head. Concentrate. Transform yourself into a fine needle of thought, a slim telepathic laser beam, stretching from this room to the vicinity of the lovely star, Betelgeuse. Got it? Good. That sharp pure mental beam piercing the universe. Hold it. Hold it firm. No spreading at the edges allowed, man. Good. Now ascend. We are climbing Jacob's ladder. This will be an out-of-the-body experience, Duvid. Up, up and away! Rise through the ceiling, through the roof, through the atmosphere, through the ionosphere, through the stratosphere, through the whatsisphere. Out-

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ward. Into the vacant interstellar spaces. O dark dark dark. Cold the sense and lost the motive of action. No, stop that stuff! Only positive thinking is allowed on this trip. Soar! Soar! Toward the little green men of Betelgeuse IX. Reach their minds, Selig. Make contact. Make. . .contact. Soar, you lazy yid-bastard! Why aren't you soaring? *Soar!*

Well?

Nothing. *Nada. Niente.* Nowhere. *Nulla. Nicht.*

Tumbling back to Earth. Into the silent funeral. All right, give up, if that's what you want. All right. Rest for a little while. Rest and then pray, Selig. Pray.

MONDAY. The hangover is gone. The brain is once again receptive. In a glorious burst of creative frenzy I rewrite *The "Electra" Theme in Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides* from gunwale to fetlock, completely recasting it, revoicing it, clarifying and strengthening the ideas while simultaneously catching what I think is just the perfect tone of offhand black hipness. As I hammer out the final words the telephone rings. Lisa Holstein. "You promised to take me home after the party," she says mournfully, accusingly. "What the hell did you do, sneak away?"

"How did you get my number?"

"From Claude. Professor Guermantes." That sleek devil. He knows everything. "Look, what are you doing right now?"

"Thinking about having a shower. I've been working all morning and I stink like a goat."

"What kind of work do you do?"

"I ghostwrite term papers for Columbia men."

She ponders that a moment. "You sure have a weird head, man. I mean really—what do you do?"

"I just told you."

A long digestive silence. Then: "Okay. I can dig it. You ghostwrite term papers. Look, Dave, go take your shower. How long is it on the subway from a hundred and tenth and Broadway to your place?"

"Maybe forty minutes if you get a train right away."

"Swell. See you in an hour, then." *Click.*

I shrug. A crazy broad. Dave, she calls me. Nobody calls me Dave. Stripping, I head for the shower, a long leisurely soaping. Then I pick up the Updike book. I get to page four and the phone rings again. Lisa: she's on the train platform at 225th, wants to know how to get to my apartment. This is more than a joke now. But okay. I can play her game. I give her the instructions.

Ten minutes later, a knock on the door. Lisa in thick black sweater, the same sweaty one as Saturday night, and tight blue jeans. A shy grin, strangely out of character for her. "Hi," she says. Making herself

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comfortable. "When I first saw you I had this intuitive flash on you: *This guy's got something special. Make it with him.* If there's one thing I've learned, it's that you've got to trust your intuition. I go with the flow, Dave, I go with the flow." Her sweater is off by now. Her breasts are heavy and round, with tiny, almost imperceptible nipples. A Jewish star nestles in the deep valley between them. She wanders the room, examining my books, my records, my photographs. "So tell me," she says. "Now that I'm here. Was I right? Is there anything special about you?"

"There once was."

"What?"

"That's for me to know and you to find out," I say and, gathering my strength, I ram my mind into hers. It's a brutal frontal assault, a rape. Of course, she doesn't feel a thing. I say, "I used to have a really extraordinary gift. It's mostly worn off by now, but some of the time I still have it and, as a matter of fact, I'm using it on you right now."

"Far out," she says and drops her jeans. No underpants. She will be fat before she's thirty. Her thighs are thick, her belly protrudes. While I inspect her flesh I savagely ransack her mind, sparing her no areas of privacy, enjoying my access while it lasts. I don't need to be polite. I owe her nothing—she forced herself on me. I check first to see if she had been lying when she said she'd never heard of Kitty. The truth: Kitty is no kin to her. A meaningless coincidence of surnames, is all.

"I'm sure you're a poet, Dave," she says as we entwine and drop onto the unmade bed. "That's an intuition flash too. Even if you're doing this term paper thing now, poetry is where you're really at."

I continue to loot her mind like a Goth plundering the Forum. She is fully open to me—I delight in this unexpected return of vigor. Her autobiography assembles itself for me. Born in Cambridge. Twenty years old. Father a professor. One younger brother. Tomboy childhood. Measles, chicken pox, scarlet fever. Puberty at eleven, lost her virginity at twelve. Abortion at sixteen. Several Lesbian adventures. Passionate interest in French decadent poets. Acid, mescalin, psilocybin, cocaine, even a sniff of smack. Guermantes gave her that. Guermantes also took her to bed five or six times. Vivid memories of that. Her mind shows me more of Guermantes than I want to see. Lisa comes through with a tough, aggressive self-image, captain of her soul, master of her fate, and so forth. Underneath that it's just the opposite, of course; she's scared as hell. Not a bad kid. I feel a little guilty about the casual way I slammed into her head, no regard for her privacy at all. But I have my needs.

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I lie there picking her brain and accepting the gift of her lips. Covertly I feed on feedback, tapping into her pleasure-responses. But then a funny thing happens. The broadcast from her mind is becoming erratic and indistinct, more noise than signal. The images break up in a pounding of static. What gets through is garbled and distant—I scramble to maintain my hold on her consciousness, but no use, no use, she slips away, moment by moment receding from me, until there is no communion at all.

She is caught by surprise. "What brought you down?" she asks.

I find it impossible to tell her. I remember Judith asking me, some weeks back, whether I had ever regarded my loss of mental powers as a kind of metaphor of impotence. And now here, for the first time, metaphor blends with reality —the two failures are integrated. He is impotent here and he is impotent there. Poor David.

"I guess I got distracted," I tell her. "Let's just rest and maybe I'll come back to life."

We rest. Side by side, stroking her skin in an abstract way, I run a few tentative probing efforts. Not a flicker on the telepathic level. Not a flicker. The silence of the tomb. Is this it, the end, right here and now? Is this where it finally burns out? And I am like all the rest of you now. I am condemned to make do with mere words.

I try again to probe her. Zero. Zee-ro. Is it gone? I think it's really gone. You have been present today at an historic event, young lady. The perishing of a remarkable extrasensory power. Leaving behind this merely mortal husk of mine. Alas.

"I'd love to read some of your poetry, Dave," she says.

MONDAY night, about seven-thirty. Lisa has left, finally. I go out for dinner to a nearby pizzeria. I am quite calm. The impact of what has befallen me hasn't really registered yet. How strange that I can be so accepting. At any moment, I know, it's bound to come rushing in on me, crushing me, shattering me. But for now I'm surprisingly cool. An oddly posthumous feeling, as of having outlived myself. And a feeling of relief—the suspense is over, the process has completed itself. The dying is done and I've survived it. Of course I don't expect this mood to last. I've lost something central to my being and now I await the anguish and the grief and the despair that must surely be due to erupt shortly.

But it seems that my mourning must be postponed. What I thought was all over isn't over yet. I walk into the pizzeria and the counterman gives me his flatly cold New York smile of welcome. And I get this, unsolicited, from behind his greasy face:

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Hey, here's the fag who always wants extra anchovies.

Reading him clearly. So it's not dead yet! Not quite dead! Only resting a while. Only hiding.

TUESDAY. Bitter cold. One of those terrible late-autumn days when every drop of moisture has been squeezed from the air and the sunlight is like knives. I finish two more term papers. Judith calls after lunch. The usual dinner invitation. My usual oblique reply.

"What did you think of Karl?" she asks.

"A very substantial man."

"He wants me to marry him."

"Well?"

"It's too soon. I don't really know him, Duv. I like him—I admire him tremendously, but I don't know whether I love him."

"Then don't rush into anything with him," I say. "Besides, if you marry him, he'd probably want you to give up Guermantes. I don't think he could dig it."

"You know about me and Claude?"

"Of course."

"You always know everything."

"This was pretty obvious, Jude."

"I thought your power was waning."

"It is, it is—faster than ever. But this was still pretty obvious. To the naked eye."

"All right. What did you think of him?"

"He's death. He's a killer."

"You misjudge him, Duv."

"I was in his head. I *saw* him, Jude. He isn't human. People are toys to him."

"If you could hear the sound of your own voice now, Duv. The hostility, the outright jealousy—"

"Jealousy? Am I so openly incestuous?"

"You always were," she says. "But let that pass. I really thought you'd enjoy meeting Claude."

"I did. He's fascinating. I think cobras are fascinating too."

"Oh, shove it, Duv."

"You want me to pretend I liked him?"

"Don't do me any favors." The old icy Judith.

"What's Karl's reaction to Guermantes?"

She pauses. Finally: "Pretty negative. Karl's very conventional, you know. Just as you are."

"Me?"

"Oh, you're so damned straight, Duv! You're such a puritan! You've been lecturing me on morality all my goddamned life, wagging your finger at me—"

"Why doesn't Karl like him?"

"I don't know. He thinks Claude's sinister. Exploitive." Her voice is suddenly flat and dull. "Maybe he's just jealous. He knows I'm still sleeping with Claude. Oh, Jesus, Duv, why are we fighting again? Why can't we just *talk*?"

"I'm not the one who's fighting. I'm not the one who raised his voice."

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"You're challenging me. That's what you always do. You spy on me and then you challenge me and try to put me down."

"Old habits are hard to break, Jude. Really, though—I'm not angry with you."

"You sound so smug!"

"I'm *not* angry. You are. You got angry when you saw that Karl and I agree about your friend Claude. People always get angry when they're told something they don't want to hear. Listen, Jude, do whatever you want. If Guermantes is your trip, go ahead."

"I don't know. I just don't know." An unexpected concession: "Maybe there *is* something sick about my relationship with him." Her flinty self-assurance vanishes abruptly. That's the wonderful thing about her—you get a different Judith every two minutes. Now, softening, thawing, she sounds uncertain of herself. In a moment she'll turn her concern outward, away from her own troubles, toward me. "Will you come to dinner next week? We very much do want to get together with you."

"I'll try."

"I'm worried about you, Duv." Yes, here it comes. "You looked so strung out on Saturday night."

"It's been a pretty rough time for me. But I'll manage." I don't feel like talking about myself. "Listen, I'll call you soon, okay?"

"Are you still in so much pain, Duv?"

"I'm adapting. I'm accepting the whole thing. I mean, I'll be okay. Keep in touch, Jude. My best to Karl." And Claude, I add, as I put down the receiver.

WEDNESDAY morning. Downtown to deliver my latest batch of masterpieces. It's colder even than yesterday. The air is clearer, the sun brighter, more remote. How dry the world seems. The humidity must be practically zero, I think. This is the sort of weather I used to function in with overwhelming clarity of perception. But I was picking up hardly anything at all on the subway ride down to Columbia, just muzzy little blurts and squeaks, nothing coherent. I can no longer be certain of having the power on any given day, apparently, and this is one of the days off. Unpredictable. That's what you are, you who live in my head—unpredictable. Thrashing about randomly in your death throes.

I go to the usual place and await my clients. They come. They get from me what they have come for. They cross my palm with greenbacks. David Selig, benefactor of undergraduate mankind. I see Yahya Lumumba like a black sequoia making his way across from Butler Library. Why am I trembling? It's the chill in the air, isn't it, the hint of winter, the death of the year?

"You got the paper, man?"

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"Right here." I deal it off the stack. "Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides. Six pages. That's twenty-one dollars, minus the five you already gave me—makes sixteen you owe me."

"Wait, man." He sits down beside me on the steps. "I got to read it first, right?"

I watch him as he reads. Somehow I expect him to be moving his lips, to be stumbling over the unfamiliar words, but no—his eyes flicker rapidly over the lines. He gnaws his lip. He reads faster and faster, impatiently turning the pages. At length he looks at me and there is death in his eyes.

"This is shit, man," he says. "I mean, this here is just shit. What kind of con you trying to pull?"

"I guarantee you'll get a B+. You don't have to pay me until you get the grade. Anything less than B+ and—"

"No, listen to me. Who talking about grades? I can't turn this thing in *at all*. Look, half this thing is jive-talk, the other half is copied straight out some book. Crazy shit, that's what. The prof is going to read it, he going to look at me, he going to say, Lumumba, who you think I am? You think I a dummy, Lumumba? You didn't write this crap, he going to say to me. You don't believe Word One of this." Angrily he rises. "Here, I going to read you some of this, man. I show you what you give me." Leafing through the pages, he scowls, spits, shakes his head. "No. Why the hell should I? You know what you up to here, man? You making fun of me, that's what. You playing games with the dumb nigger, man."

"I was trying to make it look plausible that you had written—"

"Crap. You pulling a mindfuck, man. You making up a pile of stinking Jew shit about Europydes and you hoping I get in trouble trying to pass it off as my own stuff."

"That's a lie. I did the best possible job for you—and don't think I didn't sweat plenty. When you hire another man to write a term paper for you I think you have to be prepared to expect a certain—"

"How long this take you? Fifteen minutes?"

"Eight hours, maybe ten," I say. "You know what I think you're trying to do, Lumumba? You're pulling reverse racism on me. Jew this and Jew that—if you don't like Jews so much, why didn't you get a black to write your paper for you? Why didn't you write it yourself? I did an honest job for you. I don't like hearing it put down as stinking Jew shit. And I tell you that if you turn it in, you'll get a passing grade for sure—you'll probably get a B+ at the very least."

"I gonna get flunked, is what."

"No. No. Maybe you just don't see what I was driving at. Let me try to explain it to you. If you'll

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give it to me for a minute so I can read you a couple of things—maybe it'll be clearer if I—" Getting to my feet, I extend a hand toward the paper, but he grins and holds it high above my head. I'd need a ladder to reach it. "Come on, damn it, don't play games with me! Let me have it!" I snap. He flicks his wrist and the six sheets of paper soar into the wind and go sailing eastward. Dying, I watch them go. I clench my fists—an astonishing burst of rage explodes in me. I want to smash in his mocking face. "You shouldn't have done that," I say. "You shouldn't have just thrown it away."

"You owe me my five bucks."

"Hold on, now. I did the work you hired me to do and—"

"You said you don't charge if the paper's no good. Okay, the paper was shit. No charge. Give me the five."

"You aren't playing fair, Lumumba. You're trying to rip me off."

"Who ripping who off? Who set up that money-back deal anyhow? Me? *You*. What I gonna do for a term paper now? I got to take an incomplete and it your fault. Suppose they make me ineligible for the team because of that. Huh? Huh? What then? Look, man, you make me want to puke. Give me the five."

IS HE serious about the refund? I can't tell. The idea of paying him back disgusts me and it isn't just on account of losing the money. I wish I could read him, but I can't get anything out of him on that level—I'm completely blocked now. I'll bluff. I say, "What is this, slavery turned upside down? I did the work. I don't give a damn what kind of crazy irrational reasons you've got for rejecting it. I'm going to keep the five. At least the five."

"Give me the money, man."

"Go to hell."

I start to walk away. He grabs me—his arm, fully extended toward me, must be as long as one of my legs—and hauls me to him. He starts to shake me. My teeth are rattling. His grin is broader than ever, but his eyes are demonic. I wave my fists at him, but, held at arm's length, I can't even touch him. I start to yell. A crowd is gathering. Suddenly there are three or four other men in varsity jackets surrounding us, all black, all gigantic, though not as big as he is. His teammates. Laughing, whooping, cavorting. I am a toy to them. "Hey, man, he bothering you?" one of them asks. "You need help, Yahya?" yells another. "What's the honkie doing to you, man?" calls a third. They form a ring and Lumumba thrusts me toward the man on his left, who catches me and flings me onward around the circle. I spin—I stumble—I reel. They never let me fall. Around and around and around.

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An elbow explodes against my lip. I taste blood. Someone slaps me and my head rockets backward. Fingers are jabbing my ribs. I realize that I'm going to get very badly hurt, that in fact these giants are going to beat me up. A voice I barely recognize as my own offers Lumumba his refund, but no one notices. They continue to whirl me from one to the next. Not slapping now, not jabbing, but punching. Where are the campus police? Help! Help! Pigs to the rescue! But no one comes. I can't catch my breath. I'd like to drop to my knees and huddle against the ground. They're yelling at me, racial epithets, words I barely comprehend, soul-brother jargon that must have been invented last week. I don't know what they're calling me, but I can feel the hatred in every syllable. Help? Help? The world spins wildly. I know now how a basketball would feel, if a basketball could feel. The steady pounding, the blur of unending motion. Please, someone, anyone, help me, stop them. Pain in my chest—a lump of white-hot metal back of my breastbone. I can't see. I can only feel. Where are my feet? I'm falling at last. Look how fast the steps rush toward me. The cold kiss of the stone bruises my cheek. I may already have lost consciousness—how can I tell? There's one comfort at least. I can't get any further down than this.

XX

HE WAS ready to fall in love when he met Kitty, overripe and eager for an emotional entanglement. Perhaps that was the whole trouble—what he felt for her was not so much love as simply satisfaction at the idea of being in love. Or perhaps not. He never understood his feelings for Kitty in any orderly way. They had their romance in the summer of 1963, which he remembers as the last summer of hope and good cheer before the long autumn of entropic chaos and philosophical despair descended on western society.

Selig, who was twenty-eight years old, had just moved from his Brooklyn Heights apartment to a small place in the West Seventies. He was working as a stockbroker then, of all unlikely things. This was Tom Nyquist's idea. After six years, Nyquist was still his closest and possibly only friend, although the friendship had waned considerably in the last year or two. One day Selig had said wistfully that if he could only manage to get a bundle of money together—say, twenty-five thousand dollars or so—he would go off to a remote island and spend a couple of years writing a novel, a major statement about alienation in contemporary life, something like that. He had never written anything serious and wasn't sure he was sincere about

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wanting to. He was secretly hoping that Nyquist would simply hand him the money—Nyquist could pick up twenty-five thousand dollars in one afternoon's work, if he felt like it—and say, "Here, chum, go and be creative." But Nyquist didn't do things that way. Instead he said that the easiest way for someone without capital to make a lot of money in a hurry was to take a job as a customer's man with a brokerage firm. The commissions would be decent, enough to live on and something left over, but the real money would come from riding along on all the in-shop maneuvers of the experienced brokers—the short sales, the new-issue purchases, the arbitrage ploys. If you're dedicated enough, Nyquist told him, you can make just about as much as you like. Selig protested that he knew nothing about Wall Street.

"I could teach you everything in three days," said Nyquist.

The lesson actually took less time. Selig slipped into Nyquist's mind for a quick cram course in financial terminology. Nyquist had all the definitions beautifully arranged—common stocks and preferred, shorts and longs, puts and calls, debentures, convertibles, capital gains, special situations, closed-end versus open-end funds, secondary offerings, specialists and what they do, the over-the-counter market, the Dow-Jones averages, point-and-figure charts and everything else. Selig memorized all of it. There was a vivid quality about mind-to-mind transferences with Nyquist that made memorizing things easy.

The next step was to enroll as a trainee. Every big brokerage firm was looking for beginners. Selig picked one at random and applied. They gave him a stock-market quiz by way of preliminary screening. He knew most of the answers and those he didn't know he picked up out of the minds of his fellow testees, most of whom had been following the market since childhood. He got a perfect score and was hired. After a brief training period he passed the licensing test and before long he was a registered representative operating out of a fairly new brokerage office on Broadway near 72nd Street.

He was one of five brokers, all of them fairly young. The clientele was predominantly Jewish and generally geriatric: seventy-five-year-old widows from the huge apartment houses along 72nd Street and cigar-chomping retired garment manufacturers who lived on West End Avenue and Riverside Drive. Since most of the clients were elderly and didn't work, the bulk of dealings at the office were transacted in person rather than by phone. There were always ten or twelve senior citizens schmoozing in front of the stock ticker and now and then one of them would dodder to the desk of his pet broker and

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place an order. Selig quickly became a favorite, especially among the old ladies; they liked him because he was a nice Jewish boy, and several offered to introduce him to comely granddaughters.

Business was steady but unspectacular. Once he had acquired his own nucleus of regulars, Selig's commissions ran to about a hundred and sixty a week. This was more money than he had ever made before, but hardly the kind of income he imagined brokers pulled down. "You're lucky you came here in the spring," one of the other customer's men told him. "In the winter months all the clients go to Florida and we can choke before anybody gives us any business here."

As Nyquist had predicted, he was able to turn some pleasant profits by trading for his own account; there were always nice little deals circulating in the office, hot tips with substance behind them. He started with savings of three hundred fifty dollars and quickly pyramided his wad to a high four-figure sum. But he discovered that Wall Street runs in two directions and much of his winnings melted away through badly timed trades. He came to see that he was never going to have enough of a stake to go off and write that novel.

LUCK delivered Kitty to him. She came in one muggy July morning at half-past nine. The market had not yet opened. Many of the customers had fled to the Catskills for the summer and the only people in the office were Martinson, the manager, Nadel, one of the other customer's men, and Selig.

Selig, idle, was daydreaming of falling in love with somebody's beautiful granddaughter. Then the door opened and somebody's beautiful granddaughter came in. Not exactly beautiful, maybe, but certainly attractive—a girl in her early twenties, slim and well proportioned, perhaps five feet three or four, with fluffy light-brown hair, blue-green eyes, finely outlined features, a graceful slender figure.

She seemed shy, intelligent, somehow innocent, a curious mixture of knowledge and naiveté. She wore a white silk blouse—gold chain lying on the smallish breasts—and an ankle-length brown skirt, offering a hint of excellent legs beneath. No, not a beautiful girl, but certainly pretty. What the hell, Selig wondered, does she want in this temple of Mammon at her age? She's here fifty years too early. Curiosity led him to send a probe drilling into her forehead as she walked toward him. Seeking only surface stuff: name, age, marital status, address, telephone number, purpose of visit—what else?

He got nothing.

That shocked him. It was an incredible experience, unique. To

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reach toward a mind and find it absolutely inaccessible, opaque, hidden as if behind an impenetrable wall—he had never had that happen to him before. He got no aura from her at all. She might as well have been a department store's plaster window mannequin or a mindless robot from another planet. He sat there blinking, trying to account for his failure to make contact. He was so astounded by her total blankness that he forgot to listen to what she was saying to him. He had to ask her to repeat.

"I said, I'd like to open a brokerage account. Are you a broker?"

Sheepish, fumbling, stricken with sudden adolescent clumsiness, he gave her the new-account forms. Sitting beside his cluttered desk, she told him of her investment needs while he studied the elegant structure of her high-bridged nose, fought without success against her perplexing and enigmatic mental inaccessibility and, despite or perhaps because of that inaccessibility, felt himself helplessly falling in love with her.

She was twenty-two, one year out of Radcliffe, came from Long Island and shared a West End Avenue apartment with two other girls. Unmarried—there had been a long futile love affair ending in a broken engagement not long before, he would discover later. (How strange it was for him not to be discovering everything at once, taking the information as he desired it.) Her background was in mathematics and she worked as a computer programer, a term which, in 1963, meant very little to him. He wasn't sure whether she designed computers, operated them or repaired them. Recently she had inherited sixty-five hundred dollars from an aunt in Arizona, and her parents, who evidently were stern and formidable advocates of sink-or-swim education, had told her to invest the money on her own, by way of assuming adult responsibilities. So she had gone to her friendly neighborhood brokerage office, a lamb for the shearing, to invest her money. "What do you want?" Selig asked her. "To stash it away in safe blue chips, or to go for a little action, a chance for capital gains?"

"I don't know. I don't know the first thing about the market. I just don't want to do anything silly."

Another broker—Nadel, say—would have given her the Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained speech and, advising her to forget about such old and tired concepts as dividends, would have steered her into an action portfolio—Texas Instruments, Collins Radio, Polaroid, stuff like that. Then he would churn her account every few monts, switch Polaroid into Xerox, Texas Instruments into Fairchild Camera, Collins into American Motors, American Motors back into Polaroid, running up fancy commissions for himself and, perhaps, making

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some money for her. Or perhaps losing some. Selig had no stomach for such maneuvers.

"This is going to sound stodgy," he said, "but let's play it very safe. I'll recommend some decent things that won't ever make you rich but that you won't get hurt on, either. And then you can just put them away and watch them grow, without having to check the market quotations every day to find out if you ought to sell. Because you don't really want to bother worrying about the short-term fluctuations, do you?" This was absolutely not what Martinson had instructed him to tell new clients, but to hell with that.

She smiled. It was a shy, half-forced smile, but he thought he detected flirtatiousness in her eyes. It was agony for him not to be able to read her, to be compelled to depend on external signals alone in order to know where he stood with her. But he took the chance.

"What are you doing this evening?" he asked. "I get out of here at four o'clock."

She was free, she said. Except that she worked from eleven to six. He arranged to pick her up at her apartment around seven. There was no mistaking the warmth of her smile as she left the office. "You lucky bastard," Nadel said. "What did you do, make a date with her? It violates the SEC rules for customer's men to go around laying the customers."

SELIG only laughed. Twenty minutes after the market opened he shorted two hundred Molybdenum on the Amex and covered his sale a point and a half lower at lunchtime. That ought to take care of the cost of dinner, he figured, with some to spare. Nyquist had given him the tip yesterday. During the mid-afternoon lull, he phoned Nyquist to report on his maneuver. "You covered too soon," Nyquist said immediately. "She'll drop five or six more points this week. The smart money's waiting for that."

"I'm not that greedy. I'll settle for the quick three bills."

"That's no way to get rich."

"I guess I lack gambling instinct," Selig said. He hesitated. He hadn't really called Nyquist to talk about shorting Molybdenum. I met a girl, he wanted to say, and I have this funny problem with her. I met a girl, I met a girl. Sudden fears held him back. Nyquist's silent passive presence at the other end of the telephone line seemed somehow threatening. He'll laugh at me, Selig thought. He's always laughing at me, quietly, thinking I don't see it. But this is foolishness. He said, "Tom, something strange happened today. A girl came into the office, a very attractive girl. I'm seeing her tonight."

"Congratulations."

"Wait. The thing is, I was entirely unable to read her. I mean,

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I couldn't even pick up an aura. Blank, absolutely blank. I've never had that with anybody before. Have you?"

"I don't think so."

"A complete blank. I can't understand it. What could account for her having such a strong screen?"

"Maybe you're tired today," Nyquist suggested.

"No. No. I can read everybody else, same as always. Just not her."

"Does that irritate you?"

"Of course it does."

"Why do you say of course?"

The reason seemed obvious to Selig. He could tell that Nyquist was baiting him—the voice calm, uninflected, neutral. A game. A way of passing time. He wished he hadn't phoned.

Brusquely Selig said, "I'm—well, very interested in her. And it bothers me that I have no way of getting through to her real self."

Nyquist said, "You mean you're annoyed that you can't spy on her."

"I don't like that phrase."

"Whose phrase is it? Not mine. That's how you regard what we do, isn't it? As spying. You feel guilty about spying on people, right? But it seems you also feel upset when you can't spy."

"I suppose," Selig admitted sullenly.

"With this girl you find yourself forced back on the same old clumsy guesswork techniques for dealing with people that the rest of the world is condemned to use all the time—and you don't like that. Yes?"

"You make it sound evil, Tom."

"What do you want me to say?"

"I don't want you to say anything. I'm just telling you that there's this girl I can't read, that I've never been up against this situation before, that I wonder if you have any theories to account for why she's the way she is."

"I don't," Nyquist said. "Not off the top of my head."

"All right, then. I—"

But Nyquist wasn't finished. "You realize that I have no way of telling whether she's opaque to the telepathic process in general or just opaque to you, David." That possibility had occurred to Selig a moment earlier. He found it deeply disturbing. Nyquist went on smoothly, "Suppose you bring her around one of these days and let me take a look at her. Maybe I'll be able to learn something useful about her that way."

"I'll do that," Selig said without enthusiasm. He knew such a meeting was necessary and inevitable, but the idea of exposing Kitty to Nyquist produced agitation in him. "One of these days soon," he said. "Look, all the phones are lighting up. I'll be in touch, Tom."

"Give her one for me," said Nyquist.

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XXI

David Selig
Selig Studies 101, Prof. Selig
November 10, 1976

ENTROPY AS A FACTOR IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Entropy is defined in physics as a mathematical expression of the degree in which the energy of a thermodynamic system is so distributed as to be unavailable for conversion into work. In more general metaphorical terms entropy may be seen as the irreversible tendency of a system, including the universe, toward increasing disorder and inertness. That is to say, things have a way of getting worse and worse all the time, until in the end they get so bad that we lack even the means of knowing how bad they really are.

The great American physicist Josiah Willard Gibbs (1839-1903) was the first to apply the second law of thermodynamics—the law that defines the increasing disorder of energy moving at random within a closed system—to chemistry. It was Gibbs who most firmly enunciated the principle that disorder spontaneously increases as the universe grows older. Among those who extended Gibbs' insights into the realm of philosophy was the brilliant mathematician Norbert Wiener (1894-1964), who declared in his book, *The Human Use of Human Beings,* "As entropy increases, the universe, and all closed systems in the universe, tend naturally to deteriorate and lose their distinctiveness, to move from the least to the most probable state, from a state of organization and differentiation in which distinctions and forms exist, to a state of chaos and sameness. In Gibbs' universe order is least probable, chaos most probable. But while the universe as a whole, if indeed there is a whole universe, tends to run down, there are local enclaves whose direction seems opposed to that of the universe at large and in which there is a limited and temporary tendency for organization to increase. Life finds its home in some of these enclaves."

Thus Wiener hails living things in general and human beings in particular as heroes in the war against entropy—which he equates in another passage with the war against evil: "This random element, this organic imcompleteness [that is, the fundamental element of chance in the texture of the universe],

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is one which without too violent a figure of speech we may consider evil." Human beings, says Wiener, carry on anti-entropic processes. We have sensory receptors. We communicate with one another. We make use of what we learn from one another. Therefore we are something more than mere passive victims of the spontaneous spread of universal chaos. "We, as human beings, are not isolated systems. We take in food, which generates energy, from the outside, and are, as a result, parts of that larger world which contains those sources of our vitality. But even more important is the fact that we take in information through our sense organs, and we act on information received." There is feedback, in other words. Through communication we learn to control our environment, and, he says, "In control and communication we are always fighting nature's tendency to degrade the organized and to destroy the meaningful; the tendency. . . for entropy to increase." In the very long run entropy must inevitably nail us all; in the short run we can fight back. "We are not yet spectators at the last stages of the world's death."

But what if a human being *turns* himself, inadvertently or by choice, into an isolated system?

A hermit, say. He lives in a dark cave. No information penetrates. He eats mushrooms. They give him just enough energy to keep going, but otherwise he lacks inputs. He's forced back on his own spiritual and mental resources, which he eventually exhausts. Gradually the chaos expands in him, gradually the forces of entropy seize possession of this ganglion, that synapse. He takes in a decreasing amount of sensory data until his surrender to entropy is complete. He ceases to move, to grow, to respire, to function in any way. This condition is known as death.

One doesn't have to hide in a cave. One can make an interior migration, locking oneself away from the life-giving energy sources. Often this is done because it appears that the energy sources are threats to the stability of the self. Indeed inputs do threaten the self: a push usually will upset equilibrium. However, equilibrium itself is a threat to the self, though this is frequently overlooked. There are married people who strive fiercely to reach equilibrium. They seal themselves off, clinging to one another and

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shutting out the rest of the universe, making themselves into a two-person closed system from which all vitality is steadily and inexorably expelled by the deadly equilibrium they have established. Two can perish as well as one if they are sufficiently isolated from everything else. I call this the monogamous fallacy. My sister Judith said she left her husband because she felt herself dying, day by day, while she was living with him. Of course, Judith's a slut.

The sensory shutdown is not always a willed event, naturally. It happens to us whether we like it or not. If we don't climb into the box ourselves we'll get shoved in anyway. That's what I mean about entropy's inevitably nailing us all in the long run. No matter how vital, how vigorous, how world-devouring we are, the inputs dwindle as time goes by. Sight, hearing, touch, smell—everything goes, as good old Will S. said, and we end up sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything. Sans everything. Or, as the same clever man also put it, from hour to hour we ripe and ripe, then from hour to hour we rot and rot—and thereby hangs a tale.

I offer myself as a case in point. What does this man's sad history reveal? An inexplicable diminution of once-remarkable powers, A shrinkage of the inputs. A small death, *endured while he still* lives. Am I not a casualty of the entropic wars? Do I not now dwindle into stasis and silence before your very eyes? Is my distress not evident and poignant? Who will I be when I have ceased to be myself? I am dying the heat death. A spontaneous decay. A random twitch of probability undoes me. And I am made into nothingness. I am becoming cinders and ash. I will wait here for the broom to gather me up.

That's very eloquent, Selig. Take an A. Your writing is clear and forceful and you show an excellent grasp of the underlying philosophical issues. You may go to the head of the class. Do you feel better now?

XXII

IT WAS a crazy idea, Kitty, a dumb fantasy. It could never have worked. I was asking the impossible from you. There was only one conceivable outcome, really—that I would annoy you and bore you and drive you away from me. Well, blame Tom Nyquist. It was his idea. No, blame me. I

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didn't have to listen to his crazy ideas, did I? Blame me. Blame me.

Axiom: It's a sin against love to try to remake the soul of someone you love, even if you think you'll love her more after you've transformed her into something else.

Nyquist said, "Maybe she's a mind-reader, too, and the blockage is a matter of interference, of a clash between your transmissions and hers, canceling out the waves in one direction or in both. So that there's no transmission from her to you and probably none from you to her."

"I doubt that very much," I told him. This was August of 1963, two or three weeks after you and I had met. We weren't living together yet but we had already been to bed couple of times. "She doesn't have a shred of telepathic ability," I insisted. "She's completely normal. That's the essential thing about her, Tom—she's a completely normal girl."

"Don't be so sure," Nyquist said.

He hadn't met you yet. He wanted to meet you, but I hadn't set anything up. You had never heard his name.

I said, "If there's one thing I know about her, it's that she's a sane, healthy, nicely balanced, absolutely normal girl. Therefore she's no mind-reader."

"Because mind-readers are insane, unhealthy and unbalanced. Like you and like me. Q.E.D., eh? Speak for yourself, man."

"The gift tips the spirit," I said. "It darkens the soul."

"Yours, maybe. Not mine."

He was right about that. Telepathy hadn't injured him. Maybe I'd would have had the problems I have even if I hadn't been born with the gift. I can't credit all my maladjustments to the presence of one unusual ability, can I? And God knows there are plenty of neurotics around who have never read a mind in their lives.

Syllogism:

Some telepaths are not neurotic.

Some neurotics are not telepaths.

Therefore telepathy and neurosis aren't necessarily related.

Corollary:

You can seem cherry-pie normal and still have the power.

I remained skeptical of this. Nyquist agreed, under pressure, that if you did have the power you would have probably revealed it to me by now through certain unconscious mannerisms that any telepath would readily recognize. I had detected no such mannerisms. He suggested, though, that you might be a latent telepath

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—that the gift was there, undeveloped, unfunctional, lurking at the core of your mind and serving somehow to screen your mind from my probing. Just a hypothesis, he said. But it tickled me with temptation. "Suppose she's got this latent power," I said. "Could it be awakened, do you think?"

"Why not?" Nyquist asked.

I was willing to believe it. I had this vision of your awakened to full receptive capacity, able to pick up transmissions as easily and as sharply as Nyquist and I. How intense our love would be then! We would be wholly open to one another, shorn of all the little pretenses and defenses that keep even the closest of lovers from truly achieving a union of souls. I had already tasted a limited form of that sort of closeness with Tom Nyquist, but of course I had no love for him, I didn't even really *like* him, and so it was a waste, a brutal irony, that our minds could have such intimate contact. But you? If I could only awaken you, Kitty! And why not? I asked Nyquist if he thought it might be possible. Try it and find out, he said. Make experiments. Hold hands, sit together in the dark, put some energy into trying to get across to her. It's worth trying, isn't it? Yes, I said, of course it's worth trying.

YOU seemed latent in so many other ways, Kitty—a potential human being rather than an actual one. An air of adolescence surrounded you. You seemed much younger than you actually were—if I hadn't known you were a college graduate I would have guessed you were eighteen or nineteen. You hadn't read much outside your fields of interest—mathematics, computers, technology—and, since those weren't my fields of interest, I thought of you as not having read anything at all. So I saw you as raw material awaiting the sculptor's hand. I would be your Pygmalion.

In September of 1963 you moved in with me. You were spending so much time at my place anyway that you agreed it didn't make sense to keep going back and forth. I felt very married—wet stockings hanging over the shower-curtain rod, an extra toothbrush on the shelf, long brown hairs in the sink. The warmth of you beside me in bed every night. My belly against your smooth cool butt, yang and yin. I gave you books to read: poetry, novels, essays. How diligently you devoured them! You read Trilling on the bus going to work and Conrad in the quiet after-dinner hours and Yeats on a Sunday morning while I was out hunting for the *Times*. But nothing really seemed to stick with you—you had no natural bent for literature. I think you had trouble distinguishing Lord Jim from

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Lucky Jim, Malcolm Lowry from Malcolm Cowley, James Joyce from Joyce Kilmer. Your fine mind, so easily able to master COBOL and FORTRAN, could not decipher the language of poetry and you would look up from *The Waste Land*, baffled, to ask some naive schoolgirl question that would leave me irritated for hours. A hopeless case, I sometimes thought. Although on a day when the stock market was closed you took me down to the computer center where you worked and I listened to your explanations of the equipment and your functions as though you were talking so much Sanskrit to me. Different worlds, different kinds of mind. Yet I always had hope of creating a bridge.

At strategically timed moments I spoke elliptically of my interest in extrasensory phenomena.

I made it out to be a hobby of mine, a cool dispassionate study. I was fascinated, I said, by the possibility of attaining true mind-to-mind communication between human beings. I took care not to come on like a fanatic, not to oversell my case. I kept my desperation out of sight. Because I genuinely couldn't read you, it was easier for me to pretend to a scholarly objectivity than it would have been with anyone else. And I had to pretend. My strategy didn't allow for any true confessions. I didn't want to frighten you, Kitty. I didn't want to turn you off by giving you reason to think I was a freak or, as it probably would have seemed to you, a lunatic. Just a hobby, then. A hobby.

You couldn't bring yourself to believe in ESP. If it can't be measured with a voltmeter or recorded on an electroencephalograph, you said, it isn't real. Be tolerant, I pleaded. There *are* such things as telepathic powers. I know there are. (Be careful, Duv!) I couldn't cite EEG readings—I've never been near an EEG in my life, have no idea whether my power would register. And I had barred myself from conquering your skepticism by calling in some outsider and doing some party-game mind-reading on him. But I could offer other arguments. Look at Rhine's results, look at all these series of correct readings of the Zener cards. How can you explain them, if not by ESP? And the evidence for telekinesis, teleportation, clairvoyance. . .

You remained skeptical, coolly putting down most of the data I cited. Your reasoning was keen and close—there was nothing fuzzy about your mind when it was on its own home territory, the scientific method. Rhine, you said, fudges his results by testing heterogeneous groups, then selecting for further testing only those subjects who show unusual runs of luck, dropping the others from his

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surveys. And he publishes only the scores that seem to prove his thesis. It's a statistical anomaly, not an extrasensory one, that turns up all those correct guesses of the Zener cards, you insisted. Besides, the experimenter is prejudiced in favor of belief in ESP—and that surely leads to all sorts of unconscious errors of precedure, tiny accesses of unintentional bias that inevitably skew the outcome. Cautiously I invited you to try some experiments with me, letting you set up the procedures to suit yourself. You said okay mainly, I think, because it was something we could do together and—this was early October—we were already searching for areas of closeness, your literary education having become a strain for both of us.

WE AGREED—how subtly I made it seem like your own idea!—to concentrate on transmitting images or ideas to one another. And right at the outset we had a cruelly deceptive success. We assembled some packets of pictures and tried to relay them mentally. I still have, here in the archives, our notes on those experiments:

PICTURES SEEN BY ME

1. A rowboat
2. Marigolds in a field
3. A kangaroo
4. Twin baby girls
5. The Empire State Building
6. A snow-capped mountain
7. Profile of old man's face
8. Baseball player at bat
9. An elephant
10. A locomotive

YOUR GUESS

1. Oak trees
2. Bouquet of roses
3. President Kennedy
4. A statue
5. The Pentagon
6. ? image unclear
7. A pair of scissors
8. A carving knife
9. A tractor
10. An airplane

You had no direct hits. But four out of ten could be considered close associations: marigolds and roses, the Empire State and the Pentagon, elephant and tractor, locomotive and airplane. (Flowers, buildings, heavy-duty equipment, means of transportation.) Enough to give us false hopes of true transmission. Followed by this:

PICTURES SEEN BY YOU

1. A butterfly
2. An octopus
3. Tropical beach scene
4. Young Negro boy
5. Map of South America
6. George Washington Bridge
7. Bowl of apples and bananas
8. El Greco's *Toledo*
9. A highway at rush hour
10. An ICBM

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MY GUESS

1. A railway train
2. Mountains
3. Landscape, bright sunlight
4. An automobile
5. Grapevines
6. The Washington Monument
7. Stock market quotations
8. A shelf of books
9. A beehive
10. Cary Grant

No direct hits for me either. But three close associations, of sorts, out of ten: tropical beach and sunny landscape, George Washington Bridge and the Washington Monument, highway at rush hour and beehive—the common denominators being sunlight, George Washington and intense, tight-packed activity. At least we deceived ourselves into seeing them as close associations rather than coincidences. I confess I was stabbing in the dark at all times, guessing rather than receiving, and I had little faith even then in the quality of our responses. Nevertheless those probably random collisions of images aroused your curiosity—there's something in this stuff, maybe, you began to say.

We varied the conditions for thought transmission. We tried doing it in absolute darkness, one room apart. We tried it with the lights on, holding hands. We tried it during sex. We tried it drunk. We tried it fasting. We tried it under conditions of sleep deprivation, forcing ourselves to stay up around the clock in the random hope that minds groggy with fatigue might permit mental impulses to slip through the barriers separating us. We sought in a dozen other ways to open the telepathic conduit. I thought you were as dedicated to the work as I was. But it had ceased to be either an experiment or a game—it was, you saw, plainly an obsessive quest and you asked several times in November if we could quit. All this mind-reading, you said, left you with woeful headaches. But I couldn't give up, Kitty. I overrode your objections and insisted we go on. I was hooked, I brow-beat you mercilessly into cooperating, I tyrannized you in the name of love, seeing always that telepathic Kitty I would ultimately produce. Every ten days, maybe, some delusive flicker of seeming contact buoyed my idiotic optimism. We *would* break through; we *would* touch each other's minds. How could I quit now when we were so close? But we were never close.

EARLY in November Nyquist gave one of his occasional dinner parties, catered by a Chinatown restaurant he favored. His parties were always brilliant events—to refuse the invitation would have been absurd. So at last I would have to expose you to

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him. For more than three months I had been more or less deliberately concealing you from him, avoiding the moment of confrontation out of a cowardice I didn't fully understand. We came late—you were slow getting ready. I introduced you to Nyquist. He smiled and murmured a sleek compliment and gave you a bland, impersonal kiss. You seemed shy, almost afraid of him, of his confidence and smoothness. After a moment of patter he went spinning away to answer the doorbell. A little later, as we were handed our first drinks, I planted a thought for him:

—Well? What do you think of her?

But he was too busy with his other guests to probe me and didn't pick up on my question. I had to seek my own answers in his skull. I inserted myself—he glanced at me across the room, realizing what I was doing—and rummaged for information. Layers of hostly trivia masked his surface levels: he was simultaneously offering drinks, steering a conversation, signaling for the eggrolls to be brought from the kitchen and inwardly going over the guest list to see who was yet to arrive. But I cut swiftly through that stuff and in a moment found his locus of Kitty-thoughts. At once I acquired the knowledge I wanted and dreaded. He could read you. Yes. To him you were as transparent as anyone else. Only to me were you opaque, for reasons none of us knew. Nyquist had instnatly penetrated you, had assessed you, had formed his judgment of you, there for me to examine—he saw you as awkward, immature, naive, yet also attractive and charming. (That's how he really saw you. I'm not trying, for ulterior reasons of my own, to make him seem more critical of you than he really was. You were very young—you were unsophisticated and he saw that. The discovery numbed me. Jealousy curdled me. That I should work so ponderously for so many weeks to reach you, getting nowhere, and he could knife so easily to your depths, Kitty! I was instantly suspicious. Nyquist and his malicious games—was this yet one more? *Could* he read you? How could I be sure he hadn't planted a fiction for me? He picked up on that:

—You don't trust me? Of course I'm reading her.

—Maybe yes, maybe no.

—Do you want me to prove it?

—How?

—Watch.

Without interrupting for a moment his role of host, he entered your mind, while mine remained locked on his. And so, through him, I had my first and only glimpse of your inwardness, Kitty, reflected by way of Tom Nyquist. Oh! It was no glimpse I

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ever wanted. I saw myself through your eyes through his mind. Physically I looked, if anything, better than I imagined I would, my shoulders broader than they really are, my face leaner, the features more regular. You left no doubt that you responded to me physically. But the emotional associations! You saw me as stern father, as grim schoolmaster, as grumbling tyrant. Read this, read that, improve your mind, girl! Study hard to be worthy of me! Oh! Oh! And that flaming core of resentment over our ESP experiments—worse than useless to you, a monumental bore, an excursion into insanity, a wearying, grinding drag. Night after night to be bugged by monomaniacal me. Even our screwing invaded by the foolish quest for mind-to-mind contact. How sick you were of me, Kitty! How monstrously dull you thought me!

Stung, I retreated, pulling away quickly from Nyquist. You looked at me in a startled way, I recall, as if you knew on some subliminal level that mental energies were flashing around the room, revealing the privacies of your soul. You blinked and your cheeks reddened and you took a hasty diving gulp of your drink. Nyquist shot me a sardonic smile. I couldn't meet his eyes.

Later, after we had eaten, I saw you talking animatedly to Nyquist at the far side of the room. You were flirtatious and giddy. I imagined you were discussing me and not being complimentary. I tried to pick up the conversation by way of Nyquist, but at my first tentative probe he glared at me.

—Get out of my head, will you?

I obeyed. I heard your laughter, too loud, rising above the hum of conversation. I drifted off to talk to a lithe little Japanese sculptress whose flat tawny chest sprouted untemptingly from a low-cut black sheath, and found her thinking, in French, that she would like me to ask her to go home with me. But I went home with you, Kitty, sitting sullen and graceless beside you on the empty subway train. And when I asked you what you and Nyquist had been discussing you said, "Oh, we were just kidding around. Just having a little fun."

ABOUT two weeks later, on a clear crisp autumn afternoon, President Kennedy was shot in Dallas. The stock market closed early after a calamitous slide and Martinson shut down the office, turning me out, dazed, into the street. I couldn't easily accept the reality of the progression of events. *Someone shot at the President. . . someone shot the President. . . someone shot the President in the head. . .the President has been critically wounded. . .the President has been rushed to Parkland Hospital. . .the President has received*

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the last rites. . .the President is dead. Kennedy was the only presidential candidate I ever voted for who won—and they killed him: the story of my life in one compressed bloody parable.

That November afternoon I picked up emanations of fear on all sides as I walked fearfully home. Paranoia was general everywhere. People sidled warily, one shoulder in front of the other, ready to bolt. Pale female faces peered between parted curtains in the windows of the towering apartment houses, high above the silent streets. No one lingered in the open—everyone hurried toward shelter. Anything might happen now. Packs of wolves might burst out of Riverside Drive. Maddened patriots might launch a program. From my apartment—door bolted, windows locked—I tried to phone you at the computer center, thinking you might somehow not have heard the news. Or perhaps I just wanted to hear your voice in this traumatic time. The telephone lines were choked. I gave up the attempt after twenty minutes. Then, wandering aimlessly from bedroom to living room and back, clutching my transistor, twisting the dial trying to find one radio station whose newscaster would tell me that he was still alive after all, I detoured into the kitchen and found your note on the table, telling me that you were leaving, that you couldn't stay with me any more. The note was dated 10:30 A.M., before the assassination, in another era. I rushed to the bedroom closet and saw what I had not seen before, that your things were gone. When women leave me, Kitty, they leave suddenly and stealthily, giving no warning.

TOWARD evening I telephoned Nyquist. This time the lines were open. "Is Kitty there?" I asked. "Yes," he said. "Just a minute." And put you on. You explained that you were going to live with him for a while until you got yourself sorted out. He had been very helpful. No, you had no hard feelings toward me, no bitterness at all. It was just that I seemed, well, insensitive, whereas he—he had this instinctive, intuitive grasp of your emotional needs—he was able to get onto your trip, Kitty, and I couldn't manage that. So you had gone to him for comfort and love. Goodbye, you said, and thanks for everything, and I muttered a goodbye and put down the phone. During the night the weather changed and a weekend of black skies and cold rain saw JFK to his grave. I missed everything, the casket in the rotunda, the brave widow and the gallant children, the murder of Oswald, the funeral procession, all that instant history. Saturday and Sunday I slept late, got drunk, read six books without absorbing a word. On Monday,

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the day of national mourning, I wrote you that incoherent letter, Kitty, explaining everything, telling you what I had tried to make out of you and why, confessing my power to you and describing the effects it had had on my life. Telling you also about Nyquist, warning you of what he was, that he had the power, too, that he could read you and you would have no secrets from him. Telling you not to mistake him for a real human being, telling you that he was a machine, self-programed for maximum self-realization. That the power had made him cold and cruelly strong whereas it had made me weak and jittery, insisting that essentially he was as sick as I, a manipulative man, incapable of giving love, capable only of using. I told you that he would hurt you if you made yourself vulnerable to him.

You didn't answer. I never heard from you again, never saw you again, never heard from him or saw him again either. Thirteen years. I have no idea what became of either of you. Probably I'll never know. But listen. Listen. I loved you, lady, in my clumsy way. I love you now. And you are lost to me forever.

XXIII

HE WAKES, feeling stiff and sore and numb, in a bleak, dreary hospital ward. Evidently this is St. Luke's, perhaps the emergency room. His lower lip is swollen. His left eye opens only reluctantly and his nose makes an unfamiliar whistling sound at every intake of air. Did they bring him here on a stretcher after the basketball players finished with him? He has spent relatively little time in hospitals. He wonders if his clothing is stained with dried blood, but when he succeeds in looking down —his neck, oddly rigid, does not want to obey him—he sees only the dingy whiteness of a hospital gown. Each time he breathes he imagines he can feel the ragged edges of broken ribs scraping together. Slipping a hand under the gown, he touches his bare chest and finds that it has not been taped. He does not know whether to be relieved or apprehensive about that.

Carefully he sits up. The room is crowded and noisy, beds pushed close together. The beds have curtains but no curtains are drawn. Most of his fellow patients are black and many of them are in serious condition, surrounded by festoons of equipment. Impassive nurses drift through the room, showing much the same distant concern for the patients as museum guards do for mummies in display cases. No one is paying any attention to Selig except Selig, who returns to the examination of himself. His fingertips explore his cheeks. Without a mirror he cannot tell how battered his face is, but there are many tender places. His

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left clavicle aches as from a light, glancing karate chop. His right knee radiates throbbings and twinges, as though he had twisted it in falling. Still, he feels less pain than might have been anticipated. Perhaps they have given him some sort of shot.

His mind is foggy. He is receiving some mental input from those about him in the ward, but everything is garbled, nothing is distinct; he picks up auras but no intelligible verbalizations. Diagonally across from him, two nurses have begun to erect what perhaps is a forced-feeding system, with a plastic tube snaking into the nostril of a huge unconscious bandage-swathed black. Selig's own stomach sends him no hunger signals. The chemical smell in the hospital air gives him nausea—he can barely salivate. Will they feed him this evening? How long will he be kept here? Who pays? Should he ask that Judith be notified? How badly has he been injured?

An intern enters the ward, a short dark man, concise and fine-boned of body, a Pakistani by the looks of him, moving with bouncy precision. Surprisingly, he comes right to Selig. "The X-rays show no breakages," he says without preamble in a firm, unresonant voice. "Therefore your only injuries are minor abrasions, bruises, cuts and an unimportant concussion. We are ready to authorize your release. Please get up."

"Wait," Selig says feebly. "I just came to. I don't know what's been going on. Who brought me here? How long have I been unconscious? What—"

"I know none of these things. Your discharge has been approved and the hospital has need of this bed. Please. On your feet, now. I have much to do."

"A concussion? Shouldn't I spend the night here, at least, if I had a concussion? Or *did* I spend the night here? What day is today?"

"You were brought in about noon today," says the intern, growing more fretful. "You were treated in the emergency room and given a thorough examination after having been beaten on the steps of Low Library." Once more the command to rise, given wordlessly this time, an imperious glare and a pointing forefinger. Selig probes the intern's mind and finds it accessible, but there is nothing in it except impatience and irritation. Ponderously Selig climbs from the bed. His body seems to be held together with wire. His bones grind and scrape. There is still the sensation of broken rib ends rubbing in his chest; can the X-ray have been in error? He starts to ask, but too late. The intern, making his rounds, has whirled off to another bed.

They bring him his clothing. He pulls the curtain around his bed and dresses. Yes, bloodstains on his shirt as he had feared—also on his trousers. A mess. He checks his be-

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longings. Everything is here, wallet, wristwatch, pocket comb. What now? Just walk out? Nothing to sign? Selig edges uncertainly toward the door. He actually gets into the corridor unperceived. Then the intern materializes as if from ectoplasm and points to another room across the hall, saying, "You wait in there until the security man comes." Security man? *What* security man?

There are, as he had feared, papers to sign before he is free of the hospital's grasp. Just as he finishes with the red tape, a plump, gray-faced, sixtyish man in the uniform of the campus security force enters the room, puffing slightly, and asks, "You Selig?"

He acknowledges that he is.

"The dean wants to see you. You able to walk by yourself or you want me to get you a wheelchair?"

"I'll walk," Selig says.

THEY go out of the hospital together, up Amsterdam Avenue to the 115th Street campus gate and into Van Am Quad. The security man stays close beside him, saying nothing. Shortly Selig finds himself waiting outside the office of the Dean of Columbia College. The security man waits with him, arms folded placidly, wrapped in a cocoon of boredom. Selig begins to feel almost as though he is under some sort of arrest. Why is that? An odd thought. What does he have to fear from the dean? He probes the security man's dull mind but can find nothing in it but fog."

A voice from within says, "Dean Cushing will see him now."

"Go on in," the security man says.

Cushing? A fine deanly name. Who is he? Selig limps in, awkward from his injuries, bothered by his sore knee. Facing him behind a glistening uncluttered desk sits a wide-shouldered, smooth-cheeked, youthful-looking man, junior-executive model, wearing a conservative dark suit. Selig's first thought is of the mutations worked by the passage of time—he had always looked upon deans as lofty symbols of authority, necessarily elderly or at least of middle years, but here is the Dean of the College and he seems to be a man of Selig's own age. Then he realizes that this dean is not merely an anonymous contemporary of his but actually a classmate, Ted Cushing '56, a campus figure of some repute back then, class president, football star and A-level scholar, whom Selig had known at least in a passing way. It always surprises Selig to be reminded that he is no longer young, that he has lived into a time when his generation has control of the mechanisms of power. "Ted?" he blurts. "Are you dean now, Ted? Christ, I wouldn't have guessed that. When—"

"Sit down, Dave," Cushing says politely but with no great show of

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friendliness. "Did you get badly hurt?"

"The hospital says nothing's broken. I feel half ruined, though." As he eases into a chair he indicates the bloodstains on his clothing, the bruises on his face. Talking is an effort—his jaws creak at their hinges. "Hey, Ted, it's been a long time! Must be twenty years since I last saw you. Did you remember my name or did they identify me from my wallet?"

"We've arranged to pay the hospital costs," Cushing says, not seeming to hear Selig's words. "If there are any further medical expenses we'll take care of those, too. You can have that in writing if you'd like."

"The verbal commitment is fine. And in case you're worrying that I'll press charges or sue the University—well, I wouldn't do anything like that. Boys will be boys. They let their feelings run away with themselves a little bit, but?"

"We weren't greatly concerned about your pressing charges, Dave," Cushing says quietly. "The real question is whether we're going to press charges against you."

"Me? For what? For getting mauled by your basketball players? For damaging their expensive hands with my face?" He essays a painful grin. Cushing's face remains grave. Selig struggles to interpret Cushing's joke. Finding no rationale for it, he decides to venture a probe. But he runs into a wall. He is suddenly too timid to push, fearful that he will be unable to break through. "I don't understand what you mean," he says finally. "Press charges for what?"

"For these, Dave." For the first time Selig notices the stack of typewritten pages on the dean's desk. Cushing nudges them forward. "Do you recognize them? Here, take a look."

SELIG leafs unhappily through them. They are term papers, all of them of his manufacture. *Odysseus as a Symbol of Society. The Novels of Kafka. Aeschylus and the Aristotelian Tragedy. Resignation and Acceptance in the Philosophy of Montaigne. Virgil as Dante's Mentor.* Some of them bear marks—A-, B+, A-, A—and marginal comments, mainly favorable. Some are untouched except by smudges and smears. These are the ones he had been about to deliver when he was set upon by Lumumba. With immense care he tidies the stack, aligning the edges of the sheets precisely, and pushes them back toward Cushing. "All right," he says. "You've got me."

"Did you write those?"

"Yes."

"For a fee?"

"Yes."

"That's sad, Dave. That's awfully sad."

"I needed to earn a living. They don't give scholarships to alumni."

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"What were you getting paid for these things?"

"Three or four bucks a typed page."

Cushing shakes his head. "You were good—I'll give you credit for that. There must be eight or ten guys working your racket here, but you're easily the best."

"Thank you."

"But you had one dissatisfied customer. We asked Lumumba why he beat you up. He said he hired you to write a term paper for him and you did a lousy job—you ripped him off—and then you wouldn't refund his money. All right. We're dealing with him in our own way, but we have to deal with you, too. We've been trying to find you for a long time, Dave."

"Have you?"

"We've circulated xeroxes of your work through a dozen departments the last couple of semesters, warning people to be on the lookout for your typewriter and your style. There wasn't a great deal of cooperation. A lot of faculty members didn't seem to care whether the term papers they received were phony or not. But we cared, Dave. We cared very much." Cushing leans forward. His eyes, terribly earnest, seek Selig's. Selig looks away. He cannot abide the searching warmth of those eyes. "We started closing in a few weeks ago," Cushing continues. "We rounded up a couple of your clients and threatened them with expulsion. They gave us your name, but they didn't know where you lived and we had no way of finding you. So we waited. We knew you'd show up again to deliver and solicit. Then we got this report of a disturbance on the steps of Low—basketball players beating up somebody—and we found you with a pile of undelivered papers clutched in your arm and that was it. You're out of business, Dave."

"I should ask for a lawyer," Selig says. "I shouldn't admit anything more to you. I should have denied everything when you showed me those papers."

"No need to be so technical about your rights."

"I'll need to be when you take me to court, Ted."

"No," Cushing says. "We aren't going to prosecute, not unless we catch you ghosting more papers. We have no interest in putting you in jail and, in any case, I'm not sure that what you've done is a criminal offense. What we really want to do is help you. You're sick, Dave. For a man of your intelligence, of your potential, to have fallen so low, to have ended up faking term papers for college kids—that's sad, Dave, that's awfully sad. We've discussed your case here and we've come up with a rehabilitation plan for you. We can find you work on campus, as a research assistant, maybe. There are always doctoral candidates who need assistants and we have a small fund we could dip into

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to provide a salary for you. Nothing much—but at least as much as you were making on these papers. And we'll admit you to the psychological counseling service here. It wasn't set up for alumni, but I don't see why we need to be inflexible about it, Dave. For myself, I have to say that I find it embarrassing that a man of the Class of '56 is in the kind of trouble you're in. If only out of a spirit of loyalty to our class, I want to do everything possible to help you put yourself back together and begin to fulfill the promise that you showed when. . ."

CUSHING rambles on, restating and embellishing his themes, offering pity without censure, promising aid to his suffering classmate. Selig, listening inattentively, discovers that Cushing's mind is beginning to open to him. The wall that earlier had separated their consciousnesses, a product perhaps of Selig's fear and fatigue, has started to dissolve and Selig is able now to perceive a general image of Cushing's mind, which is energetic, strong, capable, but also conventional and limited, a stolid Republican mind, a prosaic Ivy League mind.

Foremost in it is not his concern for Selig but rather his complacent satisfaction with himself—the brightest glow emanates from Cushing's awareness of his happy station in life, ornamented by a suburban split-level, a strapping blond wife, three handsome children, a shaggy dog, a shining new Lincoln Continental. Pushing a bit deeper, Selig sees that Cushing's show of concern for him is fraudulent. Behind the earnest eyes and the sincere, heartfelt, sympathetic smile lies fierce contempt. Cushing despises him. Cushing thinks he is corrupt, useless, worthless, a disgrace to mankind in general and the Columbia College Class of '56 in particular. Cushing finds him physically as well as morally repugnant, seeing him as unwashed and unclean, possibly syphilitic. Cushing suspects him of being homosexual. Cushing has for him the scorn of the Rotarian for the junkie. It is impossible for Cushing to understand why anyone who has had the benefit of a Columbia education would let himself slide into the degradations Selig has accepted. Selig shrinks from Cushing's disgust. Am I so despicable, he wonders, am I such trash?

His hold on Cushing's mind strengthens and deepens. It ceases to trouble him that Cushing has such contempt for him. Selig drifts into a mode of abstraction in which he no longer identifies himself with the miserable churl Cushing sees. What does Cushing know? Can Cushing penetrate the mind of another? Can Cushing feel the ecstasy of real contact with a fellow human being? And there is ecstasy in it. Godlike he rides pas-

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senger in Cushing's mind, sinking past the external defenses, past the petty prides and snobberies, past the self-congratulatory smugness, into the realm of absolute values, into the kingdom of authentic self. Contact. Ecstasy! That stolid Cushing is the outer husk. Here is a Cushing that even Cushing does not know. But Selig does.

Selig has not been so happy in years. Light, golden and serene, floods his soul. An irresistible gaiety possesses him. He runs through misty groves at dawn, feeling the gentle lashing of moist green fern fronds against his shins. Sunlight pierces the canopy of high foliage and droplets of dew glitter with a cool inner fire. The birds awaken. Their song is tender and sweet, a distant *cheebling,* sleepy and soft. He runs through the forest and he is not alone, for a hand grasps his hand. And he knows that he has never been alone and never will be alone. The forest floor is damp and spongy beneath his bare feet. He runs. He runs. An invisible choir strikes a harmonious note and holds it, holds it, holds it, swelling it in perfect crescendo, until, just as he breaks from the grove and sprints into a sun-bright meadow, that swell of tone fills all the cosmos, reverberating in magical fullness. He throws himself face-forward to the ground, hugging the earth, writhing against the fragrant grassy carpet, flattening his hands against the curve of the planet, and he is aware of the world's inner throbbing. This is ecstasy! This is contact! Other minds surround his. In whatever direction he moves, he feels their presence, welcoming him, supporting him, reaching toward him. Come, they say, join us, join us, be one with us, give up those tattered shreds of self, let go of all that holds you apart from us. Yes, Selig replies. Yes. I affirm the ecstasy of life. I affirm the joy of contact. I give myself to you. They touch him. He touches them. It was for this, he knows, that I received my gift, my blessing, my power. For this moment of affirmation and fulfillment. Join us. Join us. Yes! The birds! The invisible choir! The dew! The meadow! The sun! He laughs. He rises and breaks into an ecstatic dance. He throws back his head to sing, he who has never in his life dared to sing, and the tones that come from him are rich and full, pure, squarely striking the center of the pitch. Yes! Oh, the joining, the touching, the union, the oneness! No longer is he David Selig. He is a part of them and they are a part of him and in that joyous blending he experiences loss of self. He gives up all that is tired and worn and sour in him—he gives up his fears and uncertainties; he gives up everything that has separated himself from himself for so many years. He breaks through. He is fully open and the immense signal of the universe rushes freely

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into him. He receives. He transmits. He absorbs. He radiates. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

He knows this ecstasy will last forever.

But in the moment of that knowledge he feels it slipping from him. The choir's glad note diminishes. The sun drops toward the horizon. The distant sea, retreating, sucks at the shore. He struggles to hold to the joy, but the more he struggles the more of it he loses. Hold back the tide? How? Delay the fall of night? How? How? The birdsongs are faint now. The air has turned cold. Everything rushes away from him. He stands alone in the gathering darkness, remembering that ecstasy, recapturing it momentarily, reliving it—for it is already gone, and must be summoned back through an act of the will. Gone, yes. It is very quiet suddenly. He hears one last sound, a stringed instrument in the distance, a cello, perhaps, being plucked, pizzicato, a beautiful melancholy sound. *Twang*. The plangent chord. *Twing*. The breaking string. *Twong*. The lyre untuned. Twang. Twing. Twong. And nothing more. Silence envelops him. A terminal silence, it is, that booms through the caverns of his skull, the silence that follows the shattering of the cello's strings, the silence that comes with the death of music. He can hear nothing. He can feel nothing. He is alone. He is alone.

He is alone.

"So quiet," he murmurs. "So private. It's—so—private—here."

"Selig?" a deep voice asks. "What's the matter with you, Selig?"

"I'm all right," Selig says. He tries to stand, but nothing has any solidity. He is tumbling through Cushing's desk, through the floor of the office, falling through the planet itself, seeking and not finding a stable platform. "So quiet. The silence, Ted, the silence!" Strong arms seize him. He is aware of several figures bustling about him. Someone is calling for a doctor. Selig shakes his head, protesting that nothing is wrong with him, nothing at all, except for the silence in his head, except for the silence, except for the silence.

Except for the silence.

XXIV

WINTER is here. Sky and pavement form a seamless, inexorable band of gray. There will be snow soon. Silence reigns. Scrawny black and gray cats, motionless, statues of themselves, peer out of alleys. Traffic is light. Walking quickly through the streets from the subway station to Judith's place, I avert my eyes from the faces of the few people I pass. I feel shy and self-conscious among them, like a war veteran who has just been discharged from

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the rehabilitation center and is still embarrassed about his mutilations. Naturally I'm unable to tell what anybody is thinking. Their minds are closed to me now and they go by me wearing shields of impenetrable ice. But, ironically, I have the illusion that they all have access to *me*. They can look right into me and see me for what I've become. There's David Selig, they must be thinking. How careless he was! What a poor custodian of his gift! He messed up and let it all slip away from him, the dope. I feel guilty for causing them this disappointment. Yet I don't feel as guilty as I thought I might. On some ultimate level I just don't give a damn at all. This is what I am, I tell myself. This is what I now shall be. If you don't like it, tough crap. Try to accept me. If you can't do that, just ignore me.

"AS THE truest society approaches always nearer to solitude, so the most excellent speech finally falls into silence. Silence is audible to all men, at all times, and in all places." So said Thoreau, in 1849, in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers.* Of course Thoreau was a misfit and an outsider with very serious neurotic problems. When he was a young man just out of college he fell in love with a girl named Ellen Sewall, but she turned him down and he never married. I wonder if he ever made it with anybody. Probably not. Poor Thoreau. Silence is audible, Henry.

I IMAGINE, as I near Judith's building, that I meet Toni in the street. I seem to see a tall figure walking toward me from Riverside Drive, hatless, bundled up in a bulky orange coat. Strangely I feel neither excitement nor apprehension over this unexpected reunion. I am quite calm, almost unmoved. Coolly I halt in her path, smile, hold up my hands in greeting. "Toni?" I say. "Don't you know me?"

She studies me, frowns, seems puzzled for a moment. But only a moment. "David. Hello." Her face looks more lean, the cheekbones higher and sharper. There are some strands of gray in her hair. Well, of course she's in her middle thirties now. Not exactly a girl. As old now, in fact, as I was when I first met her. But in fact I know she has hardly changed at all, only matured a little. She seems as beautiful as ever. Yet desire is absent from me. All passion spent, Selig. All passion spent. And she too is mysteriously free of turbulence. I remember our last meeting, the look of pain on her face, her obsessive heap of cigarette butts. Now her expression is amiable and casual. We both have passed through the realm of storms.

"You're looking good," I say. "What is it? Eight years, nine?"

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I know the answer to that. I'm merely testing her. And she passes the test, saying, "The summer of '68." I'm relieved to see that she hasn't forgotten. I'm still a chapter of her autobiography, then. "How have you been, David?"

"Not bad." The conversational inanities. "What are you doing these days?"

"I'm with Random House now. And you?"

"Free-lancing," I say. "Here and there." Is she married? Her gloved hands offer no data. I don't dare ask. I'm incapable of probing. I force a smile and shift my weight from foot to foot. The silence that has come between us suddenly seems unbridgeable.

She says, "You've changed."

"I'm older. Tireder. Balder."

"It isn't that. You've changed somewhere inside."

"I suppose I have."

"You used to make me feel uncomfortable. I'd get a sort of queasy feeling. I don't any more."

"You mean, after the trip?"

"Before and after both," she says.

"You were always uncomfortable with me?"

"Always. I never knew why. Even when we were really close I felt—I don't know, on guard, off balance, ill at ease, when I was with you. And that's gone now. It's entirely gone. I wonder why."

"Time heals all wounds," I say. Oracular wisdom.

"I suppose you're right. God, it's cold! Do you think it'll snow?"

"It's bound to before long."

"I hate the cold weather." She huddles into her coat. I never knew her in cold weather. Spring and summer, then goodbye, get out, goodbye, goodbye. Odd how little I feel for her now. If she invited me up to her apartment I'd probably say, No, thank you, I'm on my way to visit my sister. Of course she's imaginary—that may have something to do with it. But also I'm not getting an aura from her. She's not broadcasting—or rather I'm not receiving. She's only a statue of herself, like the cats in the alleys. Will I be incapable of feeling now that I'm incapable of receiving? She says, "It's been good to see you, David. Let's get together some time, shall we?"

"By all means. We'll have a drink and talk about old times."

"I'd like that."

"So would I. Very much."

"Take care of yourself, David."

"You too, Toni."

We smile. I give her a little mock-salute of farewell. We move apart; I continue walking west, she hurries up the windy street toward Broadway. I feel a little warmer for having met her. Everything cool, friendly, unemotional between us. Everything dead, in fact. All passion spent. It's been good to see you, David. Let's get together some time, shall we? When I reach the corner I realize I have

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forgotten to ask for her phone number. Toni? Toni? But she is out of sight. As though she never was there at all.

It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And every widening slowly silence all.

That's Tennyson: *Merlin and Vivien.* You've heard that line about the rift within the lute before, haven't you? But you never knew it was Tennyson. Neither did I. My lute is riven. Twang. Twing. Twong.

Here's another little literary gem:

Every sound shall end in silence, but the silence never dies.

Samuel Miller Hageman wrote that in 1876 in a poem called *Silence.* Have you ever heard of Samuel Miller Hageman before? I haven't. You were a wise old cat, Sam, whoever you were.

JUDITH answers the door. She wears an old gray sweater and blue slacks with a hole in the knee. She holds her arms out to me and I embrace her warmly, pulling her tight against my body for perhaps half a minute. I hear music from within—the *Siegfried Idyll,* I think. Sweet, loving, accepting music.

"Is it snowing yet?" she asks.

"Not yet. Gray and cold, that's all."

"I'll get you a drink. Go into the living room."

I stand by the window. A few snowflakes blow by. My nephew appears and studies me at a distance of thirty feet. To my amazement he smiles. He says warmly, "Hi, Uncle David!"

Judith must have put him up to it. Be nice to Uncle David, she must have said. He isn't feeling well, he's had a lot of trouble lately. So there the kid stands, being nice to Uncle David. I don't think he's ever smiled at me before. He didn't even gurgle and coo at me out of his cradle. Hi, Uncle David. All right, kid. I can dig it.

"Hello, Pauly. How have you been?"

"Fine," he says. With that his social graces are exhausted; he does not inquire in return about the state of my health, but picks up one of his toys and absorbs himself in its intricacies. Yet his large dark glossy eyes continue to examine me every few moments and there does not seem to be any hostility in his glance.

Wagner ends. I prowl through the record racks, select one, put it on the turntable. Schoenberg, *Verklaerte Nacht.* Music of tempestuous anguish followed by calmness and resignation. The theme of acceptance again. Fine. Fine. The swirling strings enfold me. Rich, lush chords. Judith appears, bring-

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ing me a glass of rum. She has something mild for herself, sherry or vermouth. She looks a little peaked but very friendly, very open.

"Cheers," she says.

"Cheers."

"That's good music you put on. A lot of people won't believe Schoenberg could be sensuous and tender. Of course it's very early Schoenberg."

"Yes," I say. "The romantic juices tend to dry up as you get older, eh? What have you been up to lately, Jude?"

"Nothing much. A lot of the same old."

"How's Karl?"

"I don't see Karl any more."

"Oh."

"Didn't I tell you that?"

"No," I say. "It's the first I've heard of it."

"I'm not accustomed to needing to *tell* you things, Duv."

"You'd better get accustomed to it. You and Karl—"

"He became very insistent about marrying me. I told him it was too soon, that I didn't know him well enough, that I was afraid of structuring my life again when it might possibly be the wrong structure for me. He was hurt. He began lecturing me about retreats from involvement and commitment, about self-destructiveness, a lot of stuff like that. I looked right at him in the middle of it and I flashed on him as a kind of father figure, you know, big and pompous and stern, not a lover but a mentor, a professor, and I didn't want that. And I started thinking about what he'd be like in another ten or twelve years. He'd be in his sixties and I'd still be young. And I realized there was no future for us together. I told him that as gently as I could."

"I'm sorry."

"No need to be, Duv. I did the smart thing. I'm sure of it. Karl was good for me, but it couldn't have been permanent. The thing is not to let a phase go on too long after you know it's really over."

"Yes," I say. "Certainly."

"Would you like some more rum?"

"In a little while."

"What about you?" she asks. "Tell me about yourself. How you're making out, now that—now that—"

"Now that my superman phase is over?"

"Yes," she says. "It's really gone, eh?"

"Really. All gone. No doubt."

"And so, Duv? How has it been for you since it happened?"

JUSTICE. You hear a lot about justice, God's justice. He looketh after the righteous. He doeth dirt to the ungodly. Justice? Where's justice? Where's God, for that matter? Is He really dead, or merely on vacation or only absentminded? Look at His justice. He sends a flood to Pakistan. Zap, a

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million people dead, the adulterer and the virgin both. Justice? Maybe. Maybe the supposedly innocent victims weren't so innocent after all. Zap, the dedicated nun at the leprosarium gets leprosy and her lips fall off overnight. Justice. Zap, the cathedral that the congregation has been building for the past two hundred years is reduced to rubble by an earthquake the day before Easter. Zap. Zap. God laughs in our faces. This is justice? Where? How? I mean, consider my case. I'm not trying to wring pity from you now. I'm being purely objective. Listen, I didn't *ask* to be a superman. It was handed to me at the moment of my conception. A mutant. God's incomprehensible whim. A whim that defined me, shaped me, malformed me, dislocated me, and it was unearned, unasked for, entirely undesired, unless you want to think of my genetic heritage in terms of somebody else's bad karma, and crap on that. It was a random twitch. God said, Let this kid be a superman, and Lo! young Selig was a superman in one limited sense of the word. For a time, anyhow. God set me up for everything that happened: the isolation, the suffering, the loneliness, even the self-pity. Justice? Where? The Lord giveth, who the hell knoweth why, and the Lord taketh away. Which He has now done. The power's gone. I'm just plain folks, even as you and you and you. Don't misunderstand—I accept my fate, I'm completely reconciled to it, I am NOT asking you to feel sorry for me. I simply want to make a little sense out of this. Now that the power's gone, who am I? How do I define myself now? I've lost my special thing, my power, my wound, my reason for apartness. All I have left now is the memory of having been different. The scars of it. What am I supposed to do now? How do I relate to mankind now that the difference is gone and I'm still here? *It* died. I live on. What a strange thing you did to me, God. I'm not protesting, you understand. I'm just asking things, in a quiet, reasonable tone of voice. I'm inquiring into the nature of divine justice. I think Goethe's old harpist had the right slant on you, God. You lead us forth into life, you let the poor man fall into guilt and then you leave him to his misery. For all guilt is avenged on Earth. That's a reasonable complaint. You have ultimate power, God, but you refuse to take ultimate responsibility. Is that fair? I think I have a reasonable complaint, too. If there's justice, why does so much of life seem unjust? If you're really on our side, God, why do you hand us a life of pain? Where's justice for the baby born without eyes? The baby born with two heads? The baby born with a power men weren't meant to have? Just asking, God. I accept your

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decree, believe me, I bow to your will, because I might as well—what choice do I have, after all? But I'm still entitled to ask. Right?

THE music is ending. Celestial harmonies filling the room. Everything merging into oneness. Snowflakes swirling beyond the windowpane. Right on, Schoenberg. You understood, at least when you were young. You caught truth and put it on paper. I hear what you're saying, man. Don't ask questions, you say. Accept. Only accept, that's the motto. Accept. Accept. Whatever comes to you, accept.

The thing is, you have a whole new base to build on, Duv. When you had the power, the power was everything and you were nothing. It crowded you out of your own life. You were a superman, but you knew you didn't deserve it—it was something handed to you by God knows what mixing-up of the DNA. And so you saw yourself as a leech, a bat, a parasite, a voyeur. But now. Stripped of the power, you're nothing, right? And yet you're something. You start the way every human being starts, as a blank tablet. So build, man. Make something out of yourself. Use your real talents, use the things that David Selig still has now that the freaky stuff is gone. Enter the world for the first time. Meet mankind on an equal basis. Stop beating yourself up. You can be useful. Jesus, maybe you can even help others who were in the same mess you were in. To help others, Duv—that's a novelty, isn't it?

And wholeness. To work toward wholeness. The sort of wholeness you found in that old German farmer, right? And even in Dean Cushing. You've been split long enough. Now you can be whole, Duv, now you can be whole.

JUDITH says, "Claude Guermantes has invited me to go skiing with him in Switzerland over Christmas. I can leave the baby with a friend in Connecticut. But I won't go if you need me, Duv. Are you okay? Can you manage?"

"Sure I can. I'm not paralyzed, Jude. I haven't lost my sight. Go to Switzerland if that's what you want."

"I'll only be gone eight days."

"I'll survive."

"When I come back I hope you'll move out of that housing project. You ought to live down here close to me. We should see more of each other."

"Maybe."

"I might even introduce you to some girl friends of mine. If you're interested."

"Wonderful, Jude."

"You don't sound enthusiastic about it."

"Go easy with me," I tell her. "Don't rush me with a million

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things. I need time to sort things out."

"All right. It's like a new life, isn't it, Duv?"

"A new life. Yes. A new life, that's what it is, Jude."

THE storm is intense now. Cars are vanishing under the first layers of whiteness. At dinnertime the radio weather forecaster talked of an accumulation of eight to ten inches before morning. Judith has invited me to spend the night here, in the maid's room. Well, why not? Now of all times, why should I spurn her? I'll stay. In the morning we'll take Pauly out to the park with his sled. Into the new snow. It's really coming down now. The snow is so beautiful. Covering everything, cleansing everything, briefly purifying this tired eroded city and its tired eroded people. I can't take my eyes from it. My face is close to the window. I hold a brandy snifter in one hand, but I don't remember to drink from it. The snow has caught me in a hypnotic spell.

"*Boo*!" someone cries behind me.

I jump so violently that the cognac leaps from the snifter and splashes the window. In terror I whirl, crouching, ready to defend myself—then the instinctive fear subsides and I laugh. Judith laughs, too.

"That's the first time I've ever surprised you," she says. "In thirty-one years, the first time!"

"You gave me one hell of a jolt."

"I've been standing here for three or four minutes *thinking* things at you. Trying to get a rise out of you, but no, no, you didn't react, you just went on staring at the snow. So I sneaked up and yelled in your ear. You were really startled, Duv. You weren't faking at all."

"Did you think I was lying to you about what had happened to me?"

"No, of course not."

"Then why'd you think I'd be faking?"

"I don't know. I guess I doubted you just a little. I don't any more. Oh, Duv, Duv, I feel so sad for you!"

"Don't," I say. "Please, Jude."

She is crying softly. How strange that is, to watch Judith cry. For love of me, no less. For love of me.

IT'S very quiet now.

The world is white outside and gray within. I accept that. I think life will be more peaceful. Silence will become my mother tongue. There will be discoveries and revelations, but no upheavals. Perhaps some color will come back into the world for me, later on. Perhaps.

Living, we fret. Dying, we live. I'll keep that in mind. I'll be of good cheer. Twang. Twing. Twong. Until I die again, hello, hello, hello, hello. ★

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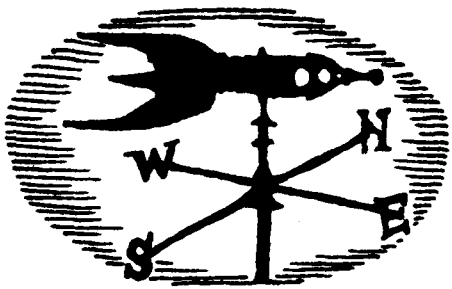

DIRECTIONS

Directions:

This is in direct response to Cy Chauvin's letter in the March '72 Galaxy. *Science fiction doesn't "have a purpose." Writers have purposes. Editors and publishers have purposes. Readers have purposes. An editor or publisher may have the purpose of advancing a certain genre (as does a fan or a fan club). It is advantageous and proper to label a product so that the customer knows what he is buying. Thus Theodore Sturgeon's* Slow Sculpture, *for instance, would have been properly turned down by a mystery magazine.*

A writer may consider himself a "hack"—that is, he may feel that his main purpose is to sell his material and earn a living. If so, it suits his purposes to understand the sales package, to submit "science fiction" (whatever that is—I've been reading it since 1942 and haven't found a definition I like for more than six months) to "science fiction markets." If his story utilizes the science fiction elements as "merely an incidental bit of background" this may be simply an attempt to aim the story at a market. It is up to the editor or publisher to decide whether this is in fact true and if the story is up to total standards to purchase it despite this background. As a reader I would prefer a good story with "incidental" science fiction elements to a poor story that is "intrinsically science fiction."

The person who defines himself as a writer must find out what he has to say and what medium best suits that "saying." An example: I was once in a play-writing class under a great teacher. I was able to "hack" it—write plays that met the technical specifications, followed the pattern of plays. They were plays—not very good ones. The teacher's reaction was to say to me: "You have the needed technical skills, but you also have something to say. And what you have to say is not the size or shape of a play. What you want to say is the size and shape of a novel. You may be a novelist—but don't run out and start writing novels. You won't be mature enough to write the novel you are trying to write until you're in your forties."

The point here is not whether I will ever be a novelist. The point is that this man, dedicated to plays, didn't say, "You don't fully exploit the medium of the play." He said, "You meet the technical requirements. . ."

To go back to my starting point—the question of whether science fiction has "a purpose."

It is an amorphous area of writing in which it suits certain writers to function, for which there is a specific market and which serves certain interest groups (fans, publishers, editors) who wish to keep that market separate and discrete from other markets. Hence, in reviewing a product—movie, book, etc.—labeled "science fiction," it is legitimate to say, "This is not sf."

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or, "The sf in this work is incidental." However, it is also legitimate to say that this (book, movie, TV program) which is or is not labeled "science fiction" is of such quality or nature that it would or would not interest science-fiction readers.

I wouldn't worry about whether sf has or has not a purpose. Writers have been able to do things within the vague outline of the medium that cannot be done within any other genre. Sometimes a writer can use science-fiction effects in another medium—and vice versa. Sometimes a rock concert can do something that people used to think only classical forms could do—the very term "rock concert" suggests as much —so media and their interpretations change, readers change, writers change. They may change so much that science fiction will merge into other media.

What has happened is that the boundaries of sf have changed. They probably will remain fluid. We do not accept the old-style Buck Rogers space opera as "hard core sf." We do admit fantasy. And sex. And "New Wave" writing. But we still haven't reached the limits of what can be done uniquely within science fiction. I think we have passed the peak of sociological explorations, utopias or anti anti-utopias, if you will. But there hasn't been much sf that truly uses psychology—that explores people really built the way Freud said they were or that digs into Jung's or Rogers' theories, creating really "other" aliens.

We've gotten into theology a bit (I think some of those priestly dropouts may have picked up a buck or two here and there) but we haven't gotten into black theology—which might give whites an insight into men (critters) of other races.

We've got some people whom other people think nonhuman. I have not seen one science-fiction story treat aliens the way we treat the Vietnamese. I have read one science-fiction situation analogous to that of the school principal in Chicago who could not get a person from the city Department of Health to test his kindergarteners for lead poisoning, even though they came from a population (urban poor) known to suffer from that affliction—and the affliction is known to be permanant if not treated early and to defeat the whole purpose of having the kids in school (they get stupid, baby, really). If I placed that story on Mars or the planet Ogacihc, you'd say, "Well written, but unbelievable. People wouldn't act that stupidly or cruelly." So we haven't touched man's inhumanity to man, let alone his inhumanity to alien.

Incidentally, why do we so often expect the alien (whether Martian or a black) to be morally "superior" to us—always on our (the dominant race's) terms. Do we confuse moral superiority with weakness? Are all whites blue-eyed devils as the Prophet says? Maybe we can explore these ideas in science fiction—we can't in mainstream, you know. The alien is mystical or good, rejects the nasty technology we wallow in. Read G. B. Shaw's Don Juan in Hell *and note where he describes the arts of peace confined to "machinery of peace a greedy dog could define. . ." but ". . .death, they wallow in it." Maybe we aren't so bad (how's that for heretical thought?). Maybe some aliens are worse.*

Mark Twain fully explored the alien who considers us amusing ants. We often see the alien who does not con-

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sider us at all. What about the alien who sees us as we see the Vietnamese? Or the goldfish? I saw some—imported from China—with big bubble eyes and distorted shaggy bodies. I thought them beautiful—what would my goldfish think?

What about an alien civilization that valued us for our sense of rhythm? For the way we played the banjo? For our peculiar color? Could we invent codes like the spirituals to communicate? Yes, I'm aware that this is explored in the C'mell series—is this science fiction? Could it be done better as a realistic novel set in 1972 in Chicago?

The answer, of course, is no.

For me science fiction is a medium than can introduce problems and dilemmas of the time and culture in which it is written in an imaginative way that can be published and considered by a larger audience than in the mainstream. I am currently writing essays on black theology, which may be published in journals and read by a handful. The C'mell series or a story (should I be successful in writing and selling it) would reach a larger audience to consider the same problems in a wider frame.

Judith M. Hochberg
Chicago, Illinois

Directions:

Re Cy Chauvin's letter in March '72 Directions: in your efforts to categorize you have forgotten the purpose of science fiction—to outline change. If an author can fulfill this purpose by putting the science fiction in shadow instead of the limelight he is still creating a science-fiction story.

What is a "genre requirement?" Is it a yardstick to measure a good story versus a bad story? If so, from whose side do we measure—and is the yardstick always constant?

What are "mainstream effects?" In fiction the principal effect is the emotion engendered. When we object to mainstream effects in science fiction do we mean that human emotions are only allowable in a Redbook *novel or a* New York Times *Book of the Year? Perhaps Cy means technique, which brings up a different point. Let's imagine two artists. One uses his three colors and a #2 brush to paint a painstakingly detailed portrait. His brother artist will use the same materials and produce an abstract image of the same subject. Each uses the same brush and the same colors, but each finishes with a different picture. What has been borrowed—and by whom?*

Cy wants authors "fully to exploit their (stories') science-fiction potential. A story's potential is different for every reader. I agree that some stories could be developed more completely and some could be cut in half and still say what they have to say. But to question a story for not cleanly fitting into a personally defined category is trying to make a hampering order out of the chaos of creation.

Good music by any name is good music.

Charles Gifford, Jr.
Rockland, Maine

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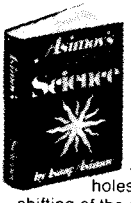

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